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# CHATS ON WRITERS AND BOOKS

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# CHATS ON WRITERS AND BOOKS.

John M. Crawford

# CHATS ON WRITERS AND BOOKS

BY
JOHN N. CRAWFORD
(J. N. C.)

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
HORATIO W. SEYMOUR

VOLUME I.

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# INTRODUCTION.

LAWYER and critic, John N. Crawford's career as a newspaper writer and essayist was determined by temperament rather than by design. He was a profound and painstaking student and he was a reader who remembered and applied the knowledge that he gained. He had what is called a judicial mind. He was too studious, too generous and too well disposed toward the truth to be a mere advocate or a partisan. With his legal training he would have made a great and good judge. If learning alone were required to make a great lawyer he would have been distinguished at the bar. But temperament, which, in his case, made strife and controversy distasteful, decreed that his successes should be achieved in journalism rather than in law. Abandoning the law, he nevertheless was a lawyer in journalism. In most of his writings, which were very voluminous, he never lost the propensity of the conscientious lawyer to weigh evidence carefully and to express convictions in language just and judicial.

## INTRODUCTION.

Born in Washington county, Pennsylvania, November 27th, 1834, Mr. Crawford removed to Davenport, Iowa, in 1857, where he remained in the practice of law until 1875, when he established himself in Chicago. At first the opportunities which the profession of his choice held out to him here seemed to offer prospects of speedy advancement, but proximity to a great market for the manuscripts which it was his delight to prepare proved too alluring for continued loyalty to the law and it was not long before he was enrolled at several newspaper offices as a regular and valued contributor. In this way for nearly thirty years Mr. Crawford maintained at various times editorial relations with the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Herald, the Chicago Evening Post and the Chicago Evening Journal until the day of his death, which took place on the 22d of April, 1903.

Sidney Smith's characterization of Macaulay, that "he was a book in breeches," might without exaggeration have been applied to Mr. Crawford. His life was in books. Like Charles Lamb, he could and would read anything that he called a book. He loved books. He revelled in libraries. He liked Chicago, as Dr. Johnson liked London, not because of its size, its architecture, its bustle and its riches, but because it had more

libraries—more books—than any other place in this region, and in a library he was in his element. He was known to all the librarians and to most of the attendants. He was an indefatigable reader and investigator. No labor was too great for him to undertake—if it carried him into the atmosphere of books. He knew where to find books, and, when found, how to use them for his purpose. He knew publishers as well as authors, and it was an inconsequential edition of an inconsequential writer with which he was not familiar. Dr. Johnson said "a man will turn over half a library to make one book." Mr. Crawford would turn over half a dozen libraries to find materials for one article.

The willingness and the capacity to take pains distinguished him in all his work. He was not like Addison, of whom it was said that he learned by merely rubbing against things. He learned by patient research and by laborious, though to him it appeared always to be delightful, reading. Unlike Lamb, also, who, with all his brilliancy, was painfully inaccurate and never quoted anything correctly, Mr. Crawford was correct in all things and in quotation he was precision itself. Accepting Emerson's dictum that "next to the originator of a good sentence is the first quoter of it,"

Mr. Crawford should stand very high among the literary men of his day. For many years he enriched the newspaper writing of Chicago with a knowledge of the best utterances not only of essayists and poets, not only of historians and philosophers, but of statesmen, of judges, of advocates and of patriotic orators as well. His mind was a vast storehouse for "those thoughts that wander through eternity," and so well ordered and disciplined was it that he was able to summon them at will for instant and apt embellishment of his writing or conversation.

Of the "chats," as he modestly called them, which have been collected in these volumes it is to be remembered that they were prepared by Mr. Crawford during hours of leisure from more pressing newspaper work and that they are presented here practically as they left his pen. It was his purpose to revise them with a view to their publication in book form, but this work he never accomplished. While the selections that have been made from his writings are confined chiefly to the discussion of English authors and books of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it would have been easily possible to compile similar volumes dealing with the writers who from the earliest beginnings of the stately literature

which he loved so well have made places for themselves, even though, in some cases, obscure ones, in our libraries.

With this in mind and reflecting also upon what those who knew him will admit would have been his fondest wish, Leigh Hunt's confession as to himself in his charming essay on "Books" comes irresistibly to mind. "How pleasant it is," he said, "to reflect that all those lovers of books have themselves become books. What better metamorphosis could Pythagoras have desired? It is the only visible change which changes no farther; which generates and yet is not destroyed. To a shape like this, so small yet so comprehensive, so slight yet so lasting, so insignificant yet so venerable, turns the mighty activity of Homer, and so turning is enabled to live and warm us forever. To a shape like this turns the placid sage of Academus; to a shape like this the grandeur of Milton, the exuberance of Spenser, the pungent elegance of Pope and the volatility of Prior. In one small room can be gathered together 'the assembled souls of all that men held wise.' May I hope to become the meanest of these existences? This is a question which every author who is a lover of books asks himself sometime in his life, and which must be pardoned because it can-

not be helped. I know not. But I should like to remain visible in this shape." To remain visible in the shape of a book—and a book with Mr. Crawford was a book indeed—would have satisfied any ambition for fame that he may have entertained.

From within these covers, therefore, there speaks to those who survive him as kindly a man as ever pursued his appointed course on earth—a learned man who was not pedantic, a wise man who had neither time nor taste for controversy and a critic who was considerate, tolerant and suggestive. Throughout his long journalistic career the effect of his work and his personal example upon readers and associates could not fail to be wholesome in that it made for the things which do not pass away, such as truth, civility, reason and art. Most of his one-time associates, appreciating the justness of his disposition and the singular moderation which he ever displayed in passing judgment upon others, may well say with Tennyson:

> "I would the great world grew like thee
> Who grewest not alone in power
> And knowledge, but by year and hour
> In reverence and in charity."

HORATIO W. SEYMOUR.

# CHATS ON WRITERS AND BOOKS.

## DEAN SWIFT.

(1667–1745.)

The reign of Queen Anne has been aptly termed the Augustan age of English literature, and the great writers of that period are usually called "The Queen Anne's Men." They were Swift, Addison, Steele, Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, and some half dozen others. Of them all Dean Swift is by far the most conspicuous as well as the grandest figure. This has not always been the opinion, and it is only within the last quarter of a century that a true estimate of Swift has been arrived at. For a hundred years the popular conception has been that he was a bitter misanthrope, a modern Timon, who hated his own kind. That he had the tongue of an asp and the

disposition of a hyena, and that he reveled in impurity. That he was an apostate, a skeptic and a bully, who rendered hopeless and desolate the lives of the two women that passionately loved him, and paid the penalty of his heartlessness with an old age of misery and madness. These are the views one gets in reading Dr. Johnson, Macaulay and Thackeray, but it is certain that nothing can be more erroneous. Thanks to the labors of recent biographers, particularly John Forster and Henry Craik, these false ideas concerning the life and character of the great dean have been dispelled. He was, indeed, a misanthrope and despised the humanity he knew so well, but despite this knowledge, his life was a long career of active benevolence. When he was a struggling parish priest with an income of less than one hundred pounds he gave a tenth of it in charity, and his generosity increased in proportion with his income. When he achieved political power he remembered his friends, and it was through his influence that Congreve, Gay, Phillips and Rowe were given remunerative offices. Pope has repeated many times how much Swift did for him; there was scarce one of that famous circle who did not owe something to his kindness and friendship. He never turned a deaf ear to sor-

row or poverty, and when at last he took up his residence in Dublin he deprived himself of many comforts that he might relieve the necessities of the poor. Such a man might be utterly wretched and unhappy, but he could not have a bad and corrupt heart. The study of his life and writings are well worth all the time that may be devoted to them.

Jonathan Swift stands in the front rank of the world's satirists, unsurpassed even by Aristophanes or Rabelais. He was the master of a style which, for its purpose, is perfection. He was the foremost, if not the first, of modern English journalists, and his political articles are models of concise and idiomatic English, solid, unadorned, judicial in tone and restrained. Powerful as he is, he always seems to have a reserved force. He made literature the handmaid of party, and under his guidance the newspaper became a power in politics. He does not attempt to stir the passions, and in all his controversial writings he never grows excited, but addresses the reason only. He knows the world of men and women and sees little good in them, and he dissects humanity like a surgeon, robbing it of its luster and beauty. All that he wrote has been collected and published, his letters, his

journals, his essays, his poems, and his more extended works. They form many volumes, and a large part is only interesting to the political and historical student. There is, however, a considerable portion that will never be forgotten.

He was born in poverty and received his education at Dublin University by the charity of an uncle. In some studies, scholastic logic for instance, he was but an idle student, and finally received his degree by special favor. He entered the Church and at twenty-one became secretary to Sir William Temple and took up his residence at Moor Park. There he wrote two of his famous books and formed that pure attachment or friendship for Esther Johnson, the "Stella" of his journal and correspondence, which forms so inexplicable an episode in his career."

Sir William Temple was a graceful essayist who wrote pleasingly on "Gardens," "Poetry," "Heroic Virtue," "The Beautiful," "The Philosophy of History" and kindred topics. About this time the celebrated controversy as to the superiority of the ancients over the moderns sprung up and raged all over Europe. Readers of Macaulay will recall the graphic description of it in the essay on Sir William Temple. Upon this question Temple wrote one of his most grace-

ful essays in which he espoused the cause of the ancients. He undertook to show how in poetry, philosophy, magic, music and literature the Greeks excelled all the moderns, and by way of illustration declared that the "Epistles of Phalaris" had more grace, more spirit, more force of wit and genius than any other writings, ancient or modern. Now the truth is that competent scholars had long pronounced these letters to be impudent forgeries by some late Greek writer, but Temple with the most amusing assurance pronounced them genuine, though as Macaulay says, he was no more able to construe one of them than he was to decipher the inscription on an Egyptian obelisk. On the strength of Temple's essay a new edition of "The Letters of Phalaris" was published by Christ's Church College, Oxford. This led to a controversy with Richard Bentley, the most eminent Greek scholar of his time, who proved beyond all question that the "Letters" were forgeries, and without literary merit.

Swift's first work, "The Battle of the Books," was founded upon this dispute, and it is the most original and pleasing of all his works. The scene is laid in a library where the ancient and modern books engage in Homeric warfare. One of the most admired passages is the apologue of the

"Bee and the Spider." The spider represents the moderns who spin their scholastic pedantry from their bowels, while the bee, like the ancients, goes direct to nature. Pallas is the patron deity of the ancients, and Momus of the moderns. The latter appeals for help to the malignant goddess, Criticism, who lies in a den on the top of a mountain surrounded by the spoils of numberless half devoured volumes. A satirical portrait of Bentley is drawn, while the battle that follows is described with great spirit.

"The Tale of a Tub" is a much more bitter satire and attacks abuses in religion. Its object is to trace the corruption of primitive Christianity, to ridicule alike the tenets of Roman Catholicism and Calvinism, and exalt the Anglican Church. It purports to describe the adventures of three brothers, Peter, Martin and Jack, who stand respectively for the Roman, Anglican and Calvinist Churches. Their father leaves each of them a new coat, and provides in his will how they should wear them. After some years of faithful observance of the will they meet with three ladies, wealth, ambition and pride, fall into excesses and violate the will. Peter sets up for sole heir and claims allegiance from his two brothers. He invites them to dinner, sets before

them a brown loaf, swears that it is "excellent good mutton," and makes them admit it is. Jack and Martin also fall out, and a storm of ridicule is poured out on Jack. It is a scathing satire on formal religion and it proved to be a bar to Swift's advancement to a bishopric. When the latter was within his grasp Queen Anne's attention was called to certain passages in "The Tale of a Tub" and she refused to appoint him.

Swift's poems are of a piece with his prose works, and have little poetry in them save the rhyme. They are witty, incisive and compact verses, but they are artificial, and generally prosaic, and are only readable in connection with his personal life.

There are few books more celebrated or better known than "Gulliver's Travels," and in the library of the young its place is next to "Robinson Crusoe." Singular, indeed, that it should have such a destiny, for it was no more written for youthful readers than were the satires of Juvenal or the dialogues of Plato. The last audience that Dean Swift had in his mind when he penned those terrible satires on human nature and human government was the audience of youth. They were written for grown-up men and women, to show them their worthlessness, their pettiness,

their vanity and pretension, their mock greatness and pomposity, their base ambitions, their pride, cruelty and imbecility. Gulliver's adventures are an allegory indeed, but none for the innocent and those unpractised in the commerce of the world.

And yet, with the earnestness and vulgarity removed and certain passages excised, the book has been published for more than one hundred years as a story for young people, and young people, without understanding its ultimate aim and meaning, have delighted in it.

When it first appeared in 1727 its novelty filled all readers with amazement, and then with merriment, and it was read by the high and the low, the learned and the illiterate. Its satire was understood and its audacity appreciated and admitted. It is only the student of literature that now reads the unexpurgated edition, or cares to read it. In its ordinary form it reveals all that is sufficient to convey Dean Swift's opinion of his fellow-man.

But there is another side to the character of Dean Swift and his career which is also deeply interesting, about which there is a mystery that has never yet been wholly cleared. His name is imperishably associated with the names of two women to whom he gave the pet names of "Stella"

and "Vanessa," and the story of their unhappy love is as famed as that of Heloise and Abelard, or Laura and Petrarch. Macaulay calls Swift a "perjured lover," but the passion of love was unknown to him.

Personally, he was a remarkably attractive man. Addison spoke of him as the most agreeable companion he had ever met. Pope described his eyes "as blue as the heavens." Sir Walter Scott says "he was tall, strong and well-made, of a dark complexion, with blue eyes, black, bushy eyebrows, a nose somewhat aquiline and features which expressed the stern, haughty and dauntless turn of his mind." The universal testimony is that he possessed an extraordinary fascination when he chose to exert it, both for men and women. No one knew better how to flatter or to praise, but toward women he never indulged in the language of gallantry. As for the passion of love, he scouted at it, saying it could only be found in play books and romances.

When Swift first went to live with Sir William Temple as his secretary, a youth of twenty, one of the inmates of the household was a child of six or seven named Esther Johnson. She was the daughter of Lady Giffard's waiting woman. Lady Giffard was Temple's sister.

The child was bright and attractive and Swift superintended her education. He Latinized her name into "Stella," and quite naturally they became great friends. After a year or so Swift left Temple's to take charge of his first parish in Ireland, where he remained several years. He then resigned his charge and returned to Moor Park, Sir William Temple's residence, and resumed his position as secretary. He found Esther grown into young womanhood and of rare beauty, and they became the warmest of friends. She loved him, but never did he express anything but friendship for her.

When he went to London and became known and powerful he kept a diary, now known as the "Journal to Stella," in which he recorded all the incidents of his daily life and what was going on in the great world, and this he sent to Stella every day. It is full of the "little language," or baby talk, that they used to indulge in at Moor Park, but never once does he speak of love or marriage.

When he went to Ireland Stella and her companion, Mrs. Dingley, also went there and resided near him, and on his visits to London they would occupy his residence. On his return they would resume their own quarters. Never in all their

lives were Swift and Stella alone together in any room or place.

When Swift was in London at the height of his power he became acquainted with Hester Vanhomrigh. Her mother was a lady of wealth, and Swift was a regular visitor at her home. Hester was twenty, fond of books and reading, and Swift became her instructor and friend. She naturally fell in love with her fascinating teacher and declared her passion. He replied with raillery and banter, but did not cease visiting her. When he fell from power and went to Dublin to live she followed him. He wrote many letters to her and much poetry, and Latinized her name into Vanessa.

All this while too he was corresponding with Stella, but to neither did he ever speak or write of love.

It is said by some of the biographers that in 1715, after his retirement to Dublin permanently, Swift and Stella were secretly married, but she was wife only in name. Other biographers deny this, and as a matter of fact there is no evidence on the point. Up to the time of her death Stella was known as a spinster and so describes herself in her will. When Vanessa discovered the friendship of Stella and Swift, she either wrote or called

to see Stella and inquired as to their relationship. She was told they were married. Whether true or false, it broke her heart and she died a few weeks afterward.

A few years later Stella also died and Swift was bereft of the love which for thirty years had been lavished upon him.

He became the unhappiest of men and life was torture to him. Dr. Delaney, his biographer, relates that he once found Swift in conversation with Archbishop King, and saw the archbishop in tears, while Swift rushed away with a countenance full of grief. "Sir," said the prelate, "you have just met the most unhappy man upon earth; but on the subject of his wretchedness you must never ask a question."

Swift survived Stella seventeen years and died a madman.

Among his treasured effects was a lock of Stella's hair inclosed in a paper on which was written "Only a woman's hair!"

# JOSEPH ADDISON.

(1672–1719.)

It was Joseph Addison's good fortune to have been born thirty-seven years earlier than Johnson and in the age of the English Mæcenases. He was a product of the sunny days brought into fashion by the liberal patronage of the magnificent Dorset, and continued by Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, and, considering that he was dependent solely upon his own abilities and was without family influence and fortune, we can recall no one in the history of English letters who achieved so great a success. He was by no means born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but there always seemed to be some one standing by who had the silver spoon ready to give him.

The son of a prosperous clergyman in the Anglican Church, he was destined for the same profession and was educated at Oxford. His classical acquirements attracted notice; he took pupils and soon acquired a reputation for elegant

scholarship which extended to the literary circles of London. He became known to Dryden through an essay written by him upon the translation of the Georgics of Virgil, and Dryden replied by a high compliment to the "ingenious Mr. Addison of Oxford." He next made the acquaintance of Montague, already a rising politician, and the latter procured for him a pension of three hundred pounds to enable him "to travel abroad and qualify himself for the diplomatic service." All this on the strength of a poem to King William and a Latin poem on the peace of Ryswick, which was dedicated to Montague.

Addison traveled in France and Italy for several years, though after a year his pension seems to have stopped, owing to the fall from power of his political friends. He returned to London, and for a time occupied an obscure lodging place. Then occurred the battle of Blenheim, and the chief minister, Godolphin, was in sad straits for a poet to celebrate the event. As Macaulay says, "He was well versed in the history of running horses and fighting cocks, but his acquaintance among the poets was very small." He knew enough, however, to be disgusted with the poems that had already been written concerning Blenheim, and he applied to Montague, now the Earl of Halifax,

who knew something of the wits of the town, to advise him where the right sort of a poet could be found who would properly commemorate Marlborough's splendid victory.

Halifax at first affected to decline the office of adviser, but after some coquetting said that he knew a gentleman who would celebrate the battle in a manner worthy of the subject. He then mentioned Addison, but insisted that the application should be made to Addison in the most courteous manner and as coming from the ministry.

On the day following this conversation of the ministers Addison was visited in his garret by no less a person than the English chancellor of the exchequer, Henry Boyle, afterward Lord Carleton, who came as an ambassador to solicit the needy poet to write a poem commemorative of the mighty deeds of the Duke of Marlborough. Rarely in the world's history has poet been addressed in the like fashion. But not only so. As a sort of retainer he was given a place worth two hundred pounds a year, which had been vacated by the death of Locke. In these propitious circumstances Addison sat down and wrote his most celebrated poem, which he called "The Campaign."

This poem is more or less dull to the modern

reader just in the proportion he is interested in the history of Queen Anne's time. It is a part of that history, and it throws a side-light on the period that produced it. It contains many fine passages, and one of them in particular is famous in literary history. That is the so-called "Simile of the Angel."

The poem goes on to describe the battle of Blenheim and its progress, and how "Great Marlbro's mighty soul" sent timely aid to fainting squadrons, and inspired repulsed battalions to engage, and taught the doubtful battle where to rage.

> So when an angel by divine command
> With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
> Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past,
> Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;
> And, pleas'd the Almighty's orders to perform,
> Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm.

These lines are familiar to every reader, as many others in this poem must be. Dr. Johnson criticised the "Simile" for the reason that it was not a comparison between things that differed in other respects, but a comparison of the same things. Marlborough is so like the angel in the poem that the action of both is almost the same, and performed by both in the same manner.

Marlborough "teaches the battle to rage"; the angel "directs the storm." Marlborough is "unmoved in peaceful thought"; the angel is "calm and serene." Marlborough stands "unmoved amidst the shock of hosts"; the angel rides "calm in the whirlwind." The lines on Marlborough are just and noble, but the "Simile" gives almost the same images a second time. In respect to this criticism Macaulay says: "We will not dispute the general justice of Johnson's remarks on this passage. But we must point out one circumstance which seems to have escaped all the critics. The extraordinary effect which this "Simile" produced when it first appeared . . . is to be chiefly attributed to the great tempest of November, 1703, which had the rage of a tropical hurricane and had left a dreadful recollection in the minds of all men."

This single poem made Addison's fortune, for it introduced him to public life and office. Aside from some translations and paraphrases this was his chief poetical performance. It was in the years subsequent to this that he wrote for the *Tatler* and *Spectator* those famous essays which have made his name immortal in our literature.

The world is not nearly so familiar with Addison as a writer of plays as it is with Addison as a

writer of essays. So long as English literature endures *The Spectator* will be read, but we have not the like assurance for "Fair Rosamond," "The Drummer," or even for "Cato." In truth the two former have long been forgotten, but "Cato" is still remembered, not so much on its own account as a great tragedy, but because it was the most notable theatrical production, not only of Queen Anne's time, but of almost every epoch in English theatrical history. One must become fairly saturated with the political as well as literary feeling of that period to appreciate the marvelous success that "Cato" won when it was first brought out. The political parties of the day, as well as the friends of Addison, vied with each other in their applause on the opening night, and Whigs and Tories alike heard in the majestic lines of the play the expression of their own patriotic principles. The theater was filled with the adherents of each party, who were bound to interpret every sentiment as a compliment to themselves.

When Addison began to write his play is not definitely known, though it must have been when he was still at Oxford. Our first knowledge of it begins in 1703, after Addison's return from Italy, when Captain Dick Steele, who was Addison's bosom friend, read four acts of it to Colley

Cibber, afterward manager of Drury Lane Theater, Cibber was so pleased with it that he urged its completion at once, but Addison vacillated and could not make up his mind to stand the ordeal of a public performance. Year after year passed, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* had their day, making Addison the most popular as well as the most beloved writer of the day, and yet "Cato" remained uncompleted. The fifth act was still wanting.

But the time came, as Dr. Johnson says, "when those who affected to think liberty in danger affected likewise to think that a stage play might preserve it; and Addison was importuned, in the name of the tutelary deities of Britain, to show his courage and his zeal by finishing his design."

Thus adjured Addison completed the play, and the night of April 14, 1713, was set for the first performance. Pope wrote the prologue and Captain Steele undertook to pack the theater with a friendly audience. Every care was taken with the rehearsals and on the opening night old Drury Lane was filled from pit to gallery. A more brilliant audience has rarely been assembled, and all the precautions about forestalling a friendly reception were simply thrown away. There was not a hostile hand in the entire building. Barton

Booth, the friend and successor of Betterton, took the part of Cato, while Wilks, Cibber and Mrs. Oldfield filled the other principal parts. The cast itself was enough to make the play successful even if the lines had not merit in themselves, but both combined made the event memorable, and the "Cato night" was long one of the traditions of the greenroom.

Barton Booth was one of the great actors of his time, graceful, picturesque and noble. His elocution was of the *ore rotundo* order, admirably adapted to the stately lines of Cato. It was said of him that "the blind might have seen him in his voice and the deaf have heard him in his visage." All the leading statesmen of the time, the ministry, with Bolingbroke and Harley at their head on the one side and the chief Whig politicians of the opposition on the other, crowded the boxes. The Whigs applauded every line in which liberty was mentioned, and the Tories echoed back the applause. During the progress of the play Bolingbroke sent for Booth between the acts and in the presence of the vast audience presented him with a purse of fifty guineas for having so well defended the cause of liberty.

Pope in writing to his friend Sir William Trumbull describes this opening night:

Cato was not so much the wonder of Rome in his days as he is of Britain in ours ; and though all the foolish industry possible has been used to make it thought a party play, yet what the author once said of another may the most properly in the world be applied to him :

" Envy itself is dumb in wonder lost,
And factions strive who shall applaud the most."

The numerous and violent claps of the Whig party on the one side of the theater were echoed back by the Tories on the other, while the author sweated behind the scenes with concern to find their applause proceeding more from the hand than the head.

In telling of Bolingbroke's present to Booth, Pope says : " The Whigs design a second present, when they can accompany it with as good a sentence." The play ran for twenty nights, an unprecedented thing in those days.

" Cato " is one of the plays that is full of " quotations." Its verses run in everybody's mouth, from the opening scene, where we are told of—

The great, the important day, big with the fate
Of Cato and of Rome,

down to the last act, where Cato says :

The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and Nature sink in years ;
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.

Everybody is familiar with many of the stock quotations, though many have forgotten that Addison was their author. As in the following:

'Tis not in mortals to command success,
But we'll do more, Sempronius—we'll deserve it.

My voice is still for war.
Gods! can a Roman senate long debate
Which of the two to choose, slavery or death?

The woman that deliberates is lost.

What a pity is it
That we can die but once to save our country.

When vice prevails and impious men bear sway
The post of honor is a private station.

One can see how such verses as these spoken with all the declamatory force of great elocution would excite an audience torn by faction and wondering whether the Stuarts would be restored, or whether the House of Hanover would be seated on the British throne when Anne should die.

Barton Booth's greatest successor in the character of Cato was Quin, a few years later, and John Philip Kemble nearly a hundred years after. It was a part very well adapted to Kemble's stately manner.

Kemble was the first actor to dress the play in something like the Roman fashion. Before his time there was little appropriateness of costume between the actors and their parts. The Roman women all appeared in hoops and brocaded satin, while the men wore full-bottomed wigs and gold-laced waistcoats, generally with plumes in their hats. Whether Booth wore feathers or not has not been reported, but it is certain he wore the wig and the waistcoat.

Kemble changed all that and set the play much more appropriately, and since his time the effort has been more and more to give historical setings and costumes to the old plays.

In our own day "Cato" is quite forgotten, and is now only worthy of recollection because of its historical interest.

Addison's fame does not depend upon it. If it did, his name would not now be remembered.

# ADDISON AND STEELE.

ADDISON and Steele are the two names, indissolubly linked together, that will always be associated with the Queen Anne period. To them we owe that particular form of literature, the Essay, which has always been popular with English readers. Steele was the inventor of the form, but it was Addison that brought it to perfection.

Born in the same year, 1672, the two friends first met at Charter House school in London, at the age of thirteen. From thence they passed to different colleges at Oxford. Steele did not stay for a degree of the University, but about the time of the battle of the Boyne enlisted in the army as a common soldier. He rose in time to a captaincy in the Guards. Stationed in London he became, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, "The most agreeable rake that ever trod the rounds of indulgence. As Captain Dick Steele he turned author, and as a means of amendment to his own life wrote "The Christian Hero."

His principles were good, but he was by nature unthrifty and improvident, and the precepts of his book were as a rule in marked contrast to his daily walk and conversation. Nevertheless the book was successful, and determined Steele to the vocation of letters. He accordingly laid down the sword and took up the pen. He wrote comedies, one of which he says, was "damned for its piety," and he became the editor of *The Gazette*, an official paper.

In April, 1709, he began the publication of *The Tatler*, a penny paper which appeared three times a week until its close in January, 1711. It was wholly Steele's invention, but after a few numbers appeared, Addison, who was then in Ireland as chief secretary to Lord Wharton, recognized the authorship, and sent in several contributions. It was a kind of writing particularly suited to his genius, and when he returned to London he became an equal contributor with Steele. The paper was so successful that Steele now made it a daily and changed its name to *The Spectator*. This famous paper appeared first in March, 1711, and was continued about two years. On *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* rests the fame of Addison and Steele.

The relative merits of these great writers have

long been settled and the palm of uniform excellence has been awarded to Addison, but there are single essays of Steele's as great as any of Addison's. Steele, too, had the most original mind, and it was his genius that originated the Spectator's Club and suggested the characters of Sir Roger de Coverley, the Templar, Will Honeycomb and Will Wimble. Addison's fine humor and masterly style brought these characters to perfection and gave them the living forms we know, and although he did not write one-half of the papers, it is his that are particularly associated with *The Spectator*.

For nearly two centuries these essays have met with unqualified praise. Their humor, style, urbanity, morality and charm have been universally commended, and the youth of every generation since have been taught to form their style as well as their morals upon *The Spectator*.

It is questionable, however, whether these essays are much read in these days, or have been for more than a generation. One of the most acute of modern American critics, Brander Matthews, in a popular magazine article, spoke, if not contemptuously, at least skeptically, of Addison's great merit, and that his style could not compare with that of certain modern essayists.

Heretical as this opinion is, it will doubtless be seconded by many readers. The beginning of the twentieth century is not in touch with the beginning of the eighteenth, and fashions in literature have as greatly changed as fashions in dress. The ruffs and farthingales of our great-great-grandmothers, and the wigs, cocked hats and knee-breeches of our great-great-grandfathers are only resurrected now as relics and curiosities. We do not care to wear them, no matter what their texture or their value. So with *The Spectator's* comment on the fashions, follies and foibles of his time. We much prefer the modern essayist's comments on our own fashions, follies and foibles, or what comes to the same thing, after we have read these we have no time left for the earlier preachments. Doubtless *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* are in every well-selected library, but the volumes are not often disturbed except by keen and industrious literary students. They find an ample reward for their persistence, for these writings are the conversations of an elegant and cultivated gentleman, masterpieces of English urbanity. They are descriptive of the world of London as it was in the days of Queen Anne. *The Spectator* shows us the streets of the town, the clubs, the theaters, the gardens,

the shops and the places of fashionable resort. He satirizes flirtations, extravagant toilets, useless visits, and dissipation. He gives us the finest portraiture of an English country gentleman, Sir Roger de Coverley, that has ever been drawn, a man kindly, tender, modest and true. Interspersed there are tales and allegories, with morals to them duly labeled. It was something new to the generation that succeeded the Restoration to find wit and humor in the service of morals and religion, but that is what Steele and Addison effected. They made morality fashionable, retouched virtue with elegance and caused pleasure to become subservient to reason. Let one read the literature of Charles II.'s time and compare it with Queen Anne's and he will see the immense change that was wrought by *The Tatler* and *Spectator*. And it is when we have some curiosity to know about the people of that day, when we linger at "Buttons" or visit the Kit Kat club, when we associate with Swift, Arbuthnot, Pope, Steele, Addison and Gay in the haunts they loved, it is then we can best appreciate these essays and linger fondly over their pages. One must be in tune with the time to find their charm.

Steele has suffered somewhat in contrast with

Addison, and both Thackeray and Macaulay have been unjust to him. But with all his improvidence he was a lovable man, human and affectionate, with great and varied talents. His humor is spontaneous and genuine, and his pathos unaffected. Leigh Hunt says: "I prefer open-hearted Steele, with all his faults, to Addison with all his essays." John Forster and William Hazlitt, critics of high authority, both rank Steele as the equal of Addison.

A political difference ruptured the friendship that had existed from boyhood, a year or two before the death of Addison. Steele survived him ten years, cherishing his memory to the end.

# RICHARD STEELE.

(1671–1729.)

RICHARD STEELE as an essayist, and as the founder of the immortal *Tatler* and *Spectator*, we all know, but as a dramatist he is not so well known. And yet, although his plays have long since been forgotten, he is deserving of remembrance on that account, for the reason that he was the first of English playwrights to attempt the purification of the stage. He undertook to show, and did show, that humor is not necessarily ribaldry, that the plot of a comedy to be acceptable need not turn upon seduction or adultery, and that there were other classes of society as open to ridicule and satire as country squires or London aldermen.

From the time of the restoration of Charles II. to the accession of Queen Anne, a period of forty-two years, and even for some years later, the comedies presented on the stage were shamelessly coarse and licentious. Immorality was

heroic, virtue was made the butt of wit, religion was mocked and travestied, all the fine gentlemen were libertines and infidels and all the fine ladies were wantons. The wit and humor of the stage, scintillant as it was, because inspired by the genius of Congreve, of Vanbrugh, of Wycherley and of Farquhar, was the wit and humor of depravity and vice. And these brilliant writers were imitated by Grub-street hacks who, without their genius, had more than their obscenity, and thus the drama became the synonym of libertinism. When ladies of fashion visited the theater they were obliged to wear masks to hide their blushes, although even in polite society it was a free-spoken age and language was used in mixed companies that would not now be tolerated.

In 1698 Jeremy Collier, a famous clergyman of that day, published his "Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the Stage," a trenchant and incontrovertible argument against the then character of the British drama. Congreve attempted a reply, but he was weak, and Collier demolished him. Dennis, Vanbrugh and others entered the lists, but Collier's argument remained unshaken. The facts were too strong.

Collier's blast did something to arouse the public, but reform was not effected, and comedy

was presented very much in the old way. In fact, many of the plays written at this time—that is, in the closing years of the reign of William III.—were even more licentious than those of Charles II.'s time.

Steele had been convinced by Collier's attack upon the immorality of the stage, and "finding himself slighted," as he says, "instead of being encouraged" by the reception of his "Christian Hero," it was now incumbent upon him to enliven his character, for which reason he "wrote the comedy called 'The Funeral,' in which (tho' full of incidents that move laughter) Virtue and Vice appear just as they ought to do."

This was Steele's first play, and it was entitled "The Funeral, or Grief à la Mode."

It was performed at Drury Lane Theater in the latter part of 1701 and instantly met with the approval of a public that had been much impressed by the assault of Collier on the stage. Here was at last a humorous play without vulgarity and coarseness, and it seems to have had a successful run. The play was original, fresh and sprightly, and its satire was directed against undertakers and lawyers, while the insincerity of grief and the mockery of justice were held up to ridicule. Cibber, Wilks, Mrs. Vanbruggen and Mrs. Oldfield,

the foremost comedians of the day, took the leading parts, and contributed to its success. The plot was not strong enough to give it a permanent place on the stage, but even now it is a very humorous and readable play. The satire of Charles Dickens against lawyers and undertakers was not more biting or effective than that of Steele.

The action turns upon the supposed death of Lord Brumpton, who, having fallen in a fit, appears to be dead. As he is recovering his servant Trusty persuades him to continue to feign death in order to see who his true friends are, and particularly to find out whether or not his young wife's affection is based on himself or his fortune.

This leads to some capital situations. The opening scene discloses Sable, the undertaker, making arrangements for the funeral, a scene that has been greatly admired by Sydney Smith and Thackeray. Sable is drilling his mutes in the proper forms of solemnity and tries to shape their countenances into a suitable degree of sadness, without much success, for cheerfulness will break in. He cries out "Let's have no laughing now on any provocation. Look yonder, that hale, well-looking puppy! You ungrateful scoundrel, did not I pity you, take you out of a great man's

service, and show you the pleasure of receiving wages? Did not I give you ten, then fifteen, now twenty shillings a week, to be sorrowful? and the more I give you, I think, the gladder you are."

There is much excellent humor, too, in the character of Puzzle, the lawyer, his instructions to his clerk and his legal jargon, which obscures whatever is plain. The supposed widow, Lady Brumpton, is also a finely portrayed character, and John Forster said she was a "masterpiece of comedy."

In the conclusion of the play, when Lord Brumpton appears returned to life, the "widow," who had so exulted in her good fortune as the legatee of Lord Brumpton's estate, disappears, for she already had another husband.

There are improbabilities and incongruities in the piece, but it proved one thing to the theater-going public. A comedy did not have to be licentious in order to be amusing. The play won the approbation of the king, and Steele was noted for promotion. Unhappily, a few months later William died, Queen Anne came in and Steele had yet his way to win at court.

Steele's success with his first comedy, "The Funeral," stimulated him to write a second play called "The Lying Lover," which was brought

out in 1703. It was adapted from one of the plays of Corneille and was intended, like its predecessor, to show that wit and humor were not necessarily the associates of vice and libertinism.

There are scenes in this play well worth reading and it had on the stage a run of six nights, but after that the public took no interest in it. Late in life Steele said that the play was "damned for its piety," and this was true to the extent that it undertook to lecture the public on the sort of plays it should patronize. In a measure it assumed to present the arguments of Jeremy Collier upon the stage.

Steele's next play was "The Tender Husband," which he dedicated to Addison as a memorial of inviolable friendship. "I should not offer it to you as such," he writes, "had I not been careful to avoid everything ill-natured, immoral or prejudicial to what the better part of mankind hold sacred and honorable."

The play is really as readable as a novel. In outline it runs as follows: Sir Henry Gubbins brings his son Humphrey, a booby and dullard, up to town to effect a match with his cousin, the niece of Hezekiah Tipkin, a city banker. The young lady is an heiress and has passed her life in reading romances. She scorns her country

cousin and takes up with Captain Clerimont, a gallant, handsome fellow who finally carries her off in triumph, leaving the booby in the most ridiculous of situations. There is lots of wit and fun in the dialogue, and the play had considerable success, but it does not survive for the reason that its plot and situations have for more than a century been appropriated, with variations, by other playwrights. They in fact belong to the stock properties of theaters, and are used even today by the writers of plays who with a modern environment present the ever-new and ever-old dramatic situation of human life.

As a matter of fact, many distinguished English writers have borrowed ideas from Steele's "The Tender Husband." The country squire, Sir Henry Gubbins, is the prototype of Fielding's Squire Western, and his son Humphrey furnished Goldsmith with the suggestion of Tony Lumpkin. The romance-loving Biddy Tipkin suggested to Sheridan his creation of Lydia Languish, and thus it has been that for nearly two centuries Steele has supplied more or less matter to the playwrights who were his successors.

When George I. came to the throne in succession to Anne in 1714 Steele found favor at court. He was knighted and appointed one of the paten-

tees of Drury Lane Theater, in association with Cibber, Booth, Doggett and Wilks. He also became a member of parliament, but that has nothing to do with our present story, which is concerned simply with Steele as a writer of plays. As a theatrical manager he was not successful, but he held on for seven or eight years, but at last was obliged to relinquish the position. He then produced his last and perhaps his best play. It was "The Conscious Lovers," and was brought out at Drury Lane in November, 1722. It was a great success, enjoying what was then considered a long run of eighteen nights, after which it was published with a dedication to George I., for which the author received five hundred guineas.

The play excited a very great interest and was received in the most flattering manner. Commendation came from all quarters, and some years afterward Fielding puts it into the mouth of Parson Adams to say that "The Conscious Lovers" was the only play fit for a Christian to see, and that it contained some things almost solemn enough to be a sermon.

Nevertheless it is an excellent comedy, but John Dennis, after his style of those days, savagely attacked it in a criticism, and for nearly a year there was a bitter bandying of words between

Steele's friends on the one hand and Dennis on the other. The play held its own for a considerable time, but it did not survive for many years.

Steele's comedies are now forgotten, but his endeavor to purge the stage of its grossness has not been forgotten. He was the pioneer of a purer drama, and he pointed the way that Goldsmith and Sheridan and the Colmans afterwards followed.

Hazlitt says: "The comedies of Steele were the first to be written expressly with a view, not to imitate, but to reform the manners of the age." But he adds: "It is almost a misnomer to call them comedies; they are rather homilies in dialogue, in which a number of pretty young ladies and gentlemen discuss the fashionable topics of gaming, dueling, etc." Thackeray in his lecture on Steele accords him still higher praise for his devotion toward women in all his writings and his respect for them. He says most truly:

> It was Steele who first began to pay a manly homage to woman's goodness and understanding, as well as to their tenderness and beauty. In his comedies his heroes do not rant and rave about the divine beauties of Gloriana or Statira. Steele admires women's virtue, acknowledges their sense and adores their purity and beauty, with an ardor that should win the good will of all women to their hearty and respectful champion.

Steele's admiration for pure and noble womanhood is one of his passports to fame. He strove in all his writings to inculcate a purer and more chivalrous feeling toward women His description of Lady Elizabeth Hastings has passed into a proverb: "Though her mien carries much more invitation than command, to behold her is an immediate check to loose behavior, and to love her is a liberal education."

Every woman's club in the land should have a portrait of Richard Steele in its rooms, under which should be displayed this splendid tribute to noble womanhood.

# CONGREVE,

## WITTIEST OF DRAMATISTS.

(1670–1729.)

WILLIAM CONGREVE, the most distinguished English poet of his time—in the interval between Dryden and Pope—was born in England in 1670. He received a good education and was intended for the bar, but literature proved the strongest attraction and he early began writing for the stage. His success was instantaneous, and he won fame and fortune before he reached middle age.

The last half of his life he passed as a man of fashion. He lived on terms of intimacy with Mrs. Bracegirdle, the famous actress, and with Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough, the daughter of the great duke. When Voltaire, then a youth, visited London, attracted by Congreve's fame, he called upon the poet. The latter begged the young Frenchman to visit him on no other foot-

ing than that of a gentleman, disclaiming the character of a poet and speaking of his plays as the mere effusions of an idle hour. "If you had been merely a gentleman," said Voltaire, "I should not have come to see you," and left him half-disgusted at such a whim.

Congreve wrote five plays that will always hold a high place in English literature, although they are no longer seen upon the stage. These are "The Double Dealer," "Love for Love," "The Mourning Bride," "The Old Bachelor," and "The Way of the World." They are full of the most brilliant dialogue, caustic epigram, and witty and humorous repartee. They describe manners, customs, and a society that are no longer tolerated, but they are true to the period when they were written and a reflection of the life of the time.

Hazlitt says: "Congreve's comedies are a singular treat to those who have cultivated a taste for the niceties of English style; there is a peculiar flavor in the very words which is to be found in hardly any other writer.

They belong to the comedy of manners and are for the study and the arm-chair. They are not for all companies or occasions, but have their own particular charm.

The ever-delighted Elia writes:

I do not know how it is with others, but I feel the better always for the perusal of one of Congreve's comedies. I am the gayer, at least, for it; and I could never connect these sports of a witty fancy in any shape with any result to be drawn from them to imitation in real life. They are a world in themselves, almost as much as fairy-land. The Fainalls and the Mirabels, the Dorimants and the Lady Touchwoods, in their own sphere, do not offend my moral sense; in fact, they do not appeal to it at all. They seem engaged in their proper element. They break through no laws or conscientious restraints. They know of none. They have got out of Christendom into the land—the Utopia of gallantry—where pleasure is duty and the manners perfect freedom. It is altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is.

Undoubtedly we must take some such view, for the manners that are portrayed would be intolerable in actual life.

The following passage from Congreve's "Mourning Bride" was pronounced by Dr. Johnson to be the finest poetical passage he had ever read. It is a description of a temple.

How reverend is the face of this tall pile;
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads
To bear aloft its arch'd and ponderous roof,
By its own weight made stedfast and immovable,
Looking tranquillity! It strikes an awe
And terror on my aching sight.

Boswell records this opinion expressed by

Dr. Johnson, and describes how eagerly Garrick endeavored to combat it when Johnson had added that he recollected none in Shakespeare equal to it. "But," said Garrick, all alarmed for the god of his idolatry, "we know not the extent and variety of his powers. We are to suppose there are such passages in his works. Shakespeare must not suffer from the badness of our memories."

"Sir," said Johnson in reply, "this is not comparing Congreve on the whole with Shakespeare on the whole; but only maintaining that Congreve has one finer passage than any that can be found in Shakespeare."

Johnson was fond of teasing Garrick by sometimes criticising Shakespeare, but as he repeats the opinion of the temple passage in his "Life of Congreve," it was probably his matured conviction. He says: "He who reads those lines enjoys for a moment the powers of a poet; he feels what he remembers to have felt before, but he feels it with great increase of sensibility; he recognizes a familiar image, but meets it again amplified and expanded, embellished with beauty and enlarged with majesty."

Johnson's critical opinions are generally extremely sane, but modern criticism does not agree

with his opinion in this instance, grand as the passage in question is. There are many passages in Shakespeare, the description of Dover Cliff in "King Lear," for instance, or Prospero's prophetic vision of the end of the world, that are far superior to it.

Macaulay in his essay on the "Dramatists of the Restoration" says of this passage:

> The noble passage which Johnson, both in writing and in conversation, extolled above any other in the English drama, has suffered greatly in the public estimation from the extravagance of his praise. Had he contented himself with saying that it was finer than anything in the tragedies of Dryden, Otway, Lee, Rowe, Southerne, Hughes, and Addison—than anything, in short, that had been written for the stage since the days of Charles the First—he would not have been in the wrong.

The greatest of the comedies is "The Way of the World" in which we have the charming heroine Millamant, one of the loveliest of female characters, whose vivacity, spirits, wit, and beauty captivate every reader. It is one of the most dazzling of English comedies, and has been praised by every reader and critic from Voltaire to George Meredith.

But all the plays have their excellences and once read the characters live in the memory.

Congreve died in 1729, leaving his fortune of

ten thousand pounds to the Duchess of Marlborough. It was a mere drop in the ocean of the Marlborough fortune and the lady expended seven thousand pounds of it for a diamond necklace. "How much better it would have been," said Dr. Young, "to have given it to Mrs. Bracegirdle."

He was buried in Westminster Abbey, where the Duchess of Marlborough erected a monument to his memory.

# ALEXANDER POPE.

(1688–1744.)

THE great figure of this period, however, next to Swift and Addison, is Alexander Pope. Upon his shoulders fell the mantle of John Dryden and in his lifetime he was esteemed as the greatest of English poets. For many years afterwards he held this distinction, though his method was often questioned. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the discussion of Pope's genius has run very high at times, and has been participated in by Bowles, Byron, Campbell, Roscoe, Isaac Disraeli, De Quincy and Macaulay, until a central literature has grown around the subject more voluminous than any that is extant concerning other English writers, save Shakespeare alone.

Pope was born in London in 1688, a delicate, sickly creature, whose life was a long disease. In some of his pieces he compares himself to a spider. From his father he inherited a deformed

shape, which studious habits only increased. In his childhood his face was angular, his voice exceedingly sweet, and he wrote verse almost as soon as he had learned his alphabet. "I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came," is his own description of himself, and from the time he could remember he looked forward to a literary career. His parents being Catholics, the ordinary schools were closed to him and his education was desultory and self-guided. At the age of twelve he plunged into general and miscellaneous reading with ardor, and thus acquired a wide knowledge of English literature. He studied Spenser and Dryden profoundly and from them gained an extensive vocabulary and a knowledge of all the niceties of versification.

When still a youth he became acquainted with William Wycherley, one of the dissolute poets of Charles II.'s time, and carried on a correspondence with him. Wycherley got Pope to revise his verses for him, and the young reviser and critic hacked and hewed so vigorously at the old poet's compositions as to make that individual roar out, and finally break off entirely with so plain-spoken a critic. Pope now gave his whole mind to his art, kept his writing-desk by his bedside and was constantly in the habit of commit-

ting to paper expressions and thoughts as they occurred to him. He wrote much and reviewed with an unsparing hand, polishing his verse until no further improvement seemed possible. He never was in haste to print, but kept his manuscript for years until it was entirely to his liking.

When grown to manhood his stature was so low, that when sitting at a table his seat had to be raised to bring him to the ordinary level. At twenty-one he was a confirmed invalid, querulous and ill-tempered. His mind was as crooked as his body, and he never could, or would, do anything with directness. If he desired a favor he would not ask for it in plain terms, but would gain it by some artifice or innuendo. He was fretful, parsimonious, egotistical and untruthful. He gained the friendship of all that brilliant circle of wits from Swift to Lady Mary, and he quarreled with all of them save Arbuthnot, Swift and Gay. Two of his bitterest and most trenchant satires were directed against Addison and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Addison had been his friend since his first appearance as a poet, and had praised him highly in the *Spectator*. Lady Mary was on terms of social intimacy with him, until he fell on his knees one day to declare his love, a performance that produced from her only a burst

of slaughter. Pope treasured his revenge, and years afterward wrote a gross couplet on the character of "Sappho" that was at once, but very unjustly, applied to Lady Mary. It was sheer Billingsgate expression only of virulent hatred. The attack on Addison is one of the best known of Pope's satires and has the merit of being an exaggerated but recognizable likeness of the great essayist. The piece was not published until after Addison's death, but copies were handed around. It is not certain that Addison ever saw it, but if he did, it made no difference in his treatment of Pope. He remained friendly to the poet until the last. Addison died in 1719 and the satire which is a part of the epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot appeared in 1723. Atticus is the name appropriated to Addison in the *Spectator*, The following is the passage:

Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires;
Blest with each talent, and each art to please,
And born to write, converse and live with ease;
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering teach the rest to sneer;

raged Pope, and he satirized Bentley in "The Dunciad."

But if it is not "Homer," it is a stirring poem and well worth reading, although many of the rhymes, to modern ears at least, are sadly at fault.

# POPE'S LETTERS.

One of the singular chapters in the history of literature is that which contains the story of Pope's correspondence. In his "Lives of the Poets," Dr. Johnson says: "One of the passages in Pope's life which seems to deserve some inquiry was a publication of letters between him and many of his friends." Johnson, even if he had had the inclination to make the inquiry, could not then have obtained the proper clues, for they were not discovered until one hundred and twenty-five years after Pope's death.

As has often been said, Pope could not do a straightforward act. His whole life was made up of artifices, and everything he did was by indirection. His friends said he "drank tea by stratagem" and "played the politician with cabbages and turnips." He was a natural equivocator, deceiver and falsifier. Some of his bitterest lampoons he published under other names and denied his authorship of them. And so his life was passed in a perpetual maze of falsehood. With all

this he was inordinately ambitious, but he desired the world to believe he was wanting in ambition, that he was contented, virtuous, and happy, a good man and a faithful friend.

As a poet he tasted all the sweets of fame in his lifetime. By common consent he was esteemed the first poet of the age. But this did not content him. He wished also to be esteemed the best man, and he hoped by a series of colossal lies and deceptions to bring this about. Then he would die happy. His friends were the ornament of the most brilliant, polished, and witty society of the age. They were men of wide repute, and the world gave them great honor. What if the world should now be made to see the terms of intimacy in which Pope lived with them and how highly they regarded him? Accident helped him to a scheme whereby he thought this could be done with the utmost sureness and safety.

Pope had long corresponded, not only with many of the brilliant men of the time but with several much more obscure. Among these latter were Henry Cromwell and John Caryll, his friends from boyhood, with whom he had maintained a lifelong familiar correspondence.

In the year 1726 a wretched and piratical book-

seller named Edmund Curll, whom Pope had often lampooned, became possessed of the letters Pope had written to Henry Cromwell, the latter being then dead, and published them. Pope being at this time in the first flush of his fame the correspondence met with a ready sale. The letters were said to be full of wit and gayety, and apparently did as much credit to the heart as to the head of the poet. Pope affected to depreciate them, but the fact was he was only mortified because they were addressed to so humble a person as his boyhood's friend. If they had only been addressed to some of his great friends, that the world might see how he stood with them, how much better it would be? There would then be no reason for mortification. Why not then have such letters published? To think of the thing was to brood over it, and to brood over it was to contrive a plan whereby it might be carried out.

To publish one's own correspondence was not so common a thing in those days as to relieve one from the imputation of vanity if he did it. The Cromwell letters had been published clandestinely, and Pope now proposed to himself a scheme whereby other of his letters should be published in the same way. He commenced by

writing to his friends for the return of his letters, which he pretended were in danger of meeting a similar fate to Cromwell's unless they were given into the custody of their writer. The chief of his correspondents was, in fact, John Caryll, a Roman Catholic country gentleman who for twenty-five years was his intimate friend. When Pope wrote to him for his letters Caryll was loath to comply, but he finally yielded. But before returning them, unknown to Pope and to the whole world at the time, he copied the greater part of the collection. Subsequently Pope regained almost all of his letters from his different correspondents.

Having obtained the letters he proceeded to arrange them in order, to edit, to rewrite many of them and to redirect them. From his letters to Caryll he compiled in whole, or in part, four to Blount, four to Addison, two to Congreve and one each to Wycherley, Steele, Trumbull and Digby. Half a dozen letters at most were allotted to his lifelong friend, while fifteen were assigned to more imposing names. Something in the same way he treated other letters he had written. He then had fair copies made of them, and as a pretended protection to himself he prevailed upon Lord Oxford to allow him to deposit the Wycherley

letters and some others in his library. It took several years to bring this all about, but the crooked little poet, if he had the form, had also the patience of the spider. He waited until Caryll, Congreve, Addison, Gay and Arbuthnot were dead and then contrived a plot to have the letters stolen and published by his enemy, Curll. This gave him an occasion to repudiate the publication and at the same time afforded him an opportunity to publish an authorized version.

After innumerable tricks, devices, intrigues and lies, Pope finally succeeded in putting into Curll's possession several sets of the letters without that worthy pirate suspecting from whose hands they actually came. They were published in 1735 and Pope made a tremendous outburst of injured innocence over the matter. Investigations and lawsuits followed which only tended to make things muddier. More than one shrewd person suspected Pope's hand as the moving instrumentality throughout, but it ended only with suspicion. Two years later Pope published an authorized edition of the letters with a preface explanatory, historic and apologetic, and in which the poet places himself in the most amiable and interesting light. Johnson tells us the effect of the publication was to fill the nation with praises

of the admirable moral qualities revealed in Pope's letters. And yet there was a lurking suspicion in the old moralist's mind that the circumstances of the publication required some investigation.

Pope went to his grave in 1744 firmly believing that he had left behind a record which would prove to all generations his admirable moral sense, his simplicity, modesty and fidelity to his friends, and his utter indifference to fame. As a matter of fact the whole world is now convinced that he was a most astounding liar and hypocrite.

Some time between the years of 1855 and 1860 Mr. Wentworth Dilke, then the editor of the London *Athenæum*, while prosecuting an investigation concerning Pope and his writings, was informed that there were some documents and papers formerly belonging to the Caryll family stored away in an outhouse on the estate they once owned. Mr. Dilke obtained permission to examine them, and he there discovered the letter book in Caryll's hand containing copies of Pope's letters to him. A comparison of these originals with the letters as published by Pope quickly revealed the methods the poet had pursued. It showed that he had improved the composition, altered the dates and changed the addresses of a great number of the letters; that he had treated

these productions precisely as he had treated his poetry, carving and shaping them so as to give them greater literary value. He knew that letters addressed to an obscure country gentleman would have no interest for the public, but if improved and brightened a little and addressed to some of the wits of the time they would be far more entertaining, and at the same time would show on what footing he stood with them.

As for the letters as compositions they have never been greatly admired save by a few of Pope's most zealous worshipers. Thackeray has praised them, but he wrote before Pope's manipulation of them was known. They throw some side-lights on the literary history of the time and give us some views of the Queen Anne's men not to be had elsewhere. They, therefore, have a certain value for the student, and in that respect will hold a place in literature. But their method of preparation and publication robs them of half their value, and while reading the admirable moral precepts of Mr. Pope, and his wise and witty observations, we grow more and more indignant at his miserable hypocrisy.

# LORD HALIFAX,

## LITERATURE'S GREAT PATRON.

(1661–1715.)

MACAULAY, in describing the period when Samuel Johnson first went up to London, calls it "a dark night between two sunny days. The age of Mæcenases had passed away. The age of general curiosity and intelligence had not arrived." He then goes on to speak of the honors and rewards that were showered upon men of letters by the chiefs of both the great parties in the reigns of William III., of Anne, and of George I. "It was to a poem on the death of Charles II. and to the City and Country Mouse that Montague owed his introduction into public life, his earldom, his garter and his auditorship of the exchequer."

Charles Montague, afterward the Earl of Halifax, was indebted to the Earl of Dorset, who introduced him to William III. shortly after the latter's coronation, for his rise in life. "Your

majesty, I have brought a Mouse to have the honor of kissing your hand." To which the king replied: "You will do well to put me in the way of making a man of him," and thereupon ordered him a pension of five hundred pounds until something better should turn up. Dr. Johnson in his life of Halifax discredits this story, for the reason that it implies a greater acquaintance with English proverbial expressions than King William, who was a Hollander, could possibly have attained. However that may be, honors and preferments fell fast and thick upon Montague, and in quick succession he was made one of the commissioners of the treasury, was called to the privy council and became chancellor of the exchequer. Higher honors were also in reserve for him.

As a poet and man of letters merely the name of Charles Montague would no longer be remembered. He wrote verse that was not contemptible, but which no one cares to read a second time. His chief performance, which was written in collaboration with Matthew Prior, was entitled "The City Mouse and the Country Mouse," being a parody or burlesque of Dryden's "Hind and Panther." In the latter poem Dryden, who had become a convert to Roman Catholicism, under-

took to show the superiority and greater purity of the Catholic church over the Anglican, and he portrays the one as a hind, pure and unspotted, and the other as a panther, fierce, vindictive and savage. A specimen of poem and parody may be given:

A Milk-white Hind, immortal and unchang'd,
Fed on the lawns, and in the forest rang'd;
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She feared no danger, for she knew no sin;
Yet had she oft been chased with horns and hounds,
And Scythian shafts, and many-winged wounds;
Aimed at her heart; was often forc'd to fly,
And doom'd to death, though fated not to die.

Montague's verse runs thus:

A Milk-white Mouse, immortal and unchang'd,
Fed on soft cheese, and o'er the dairy rang'd;
Without unspotted, innocent within.
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no gin;
Yet had she oft been scarr'd by bloody claws
Of winged owls and stern grimalkin's paws,
Aimed at her destin'd head, which made her fly,
Tho' she was doom'd to death, and fated not to die.

To modern taste, familiar with parodies far superior to this, Montague's performance has no great interest, particularly as the questions involved no longer affect us. But in those days parody was a new form of humor, while the conflict be-

tween the churches was deadly. Consequently the burlesque made a tremendous impression, with the result that when King William came in he did all in his power to "make a man of the mouse" and to shower favors on Montague.

Nor was Montague at all forgetful of what he owed to patronage, and on his own part became in turn one of the most munificent and distinguished patrons of letters. It is to this, rather than to what he wrote, that he owes his place among the "wits of Queen Anne's time."

Charles Montague was born in 1661, and was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. He was first intended for the Church, but a poem he wrote in 1685 on the death of Charles II. attracted much attention and introduced him to the wits of London. Next followed his burlesque on Dryden, and it was thought by his friends that so much genius ought no to be lost in a country rectory. Through the influence of Dorset he became a member of parliament, and soon attracted attention by his eloquence and ability. Under King William he became one of the most powerful of ministers, and it was he, in connection with the Lord Keeper Somers, Isaac Newton and John Locke, who reformed the English currency and gave it stability.

The story of this feat of statesmanship forms one of the most interesting chapters in Macaulay's history.

Montague was also the founder of the Bank of England, and in many other ways he impressed his statesmanship permanently upon the history of Great Britain. He proposed and negotiated the union between England and Scotland, founded the East India Company, and for a number of years his career was more splendid and more successful than had ever before fallen to the lot of a member of the House of Commons. From obscurity he had risen to great preferment, and from a writer of mediocre verses he had become the foremost statesman of the age.

Small wonder that so brilliant a career should excite envy and multiply enemies, still less wonderful is it that his own head should be turned and personal vanity and arrogance overmaster him. He became the mark for slander, detraction and ridicule, and a crowd of libelers assailed him. Boundless rapacity and all manner of corruption were charged against him. Twice he was impeached by the House of Commons and twice the articles of impeachment were dismissed by the House of Lords. When Anne succeeded to the throne Montague was dismissed from

office and much popular ignominy was heaped upon him. William had raised him to the peerage as Baron Halifax, but during the whole of Anne's reign he was out of office. Nevertheless, he remained the constant friend of men of letters. He promoted the fortunes of Isaac Newton, who was his lifelong friend; of Addison, Steele, Prior, Congreve and many others. Swift and Pope alone were hostile to him, and after his death spoke of him, Swift slightingly, but Pope with the bitterest acrimony.

Swift wrote:

> While Montague, who claimed the station
> To be Mæcenas of the nation,
> For poets often table kept,
> But ne'er considered where they slept;
> Himself as rich as fifty Jews,
> Was easy though they wanted shoes.

In the epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, Pope characterizes Montague as Bufo:

> Proud as Apollo on his forked hill,
> Sat full-blown Bufo, puffed by every quill;
> Fed with soft dedication all day long,
> Horace and he went hand in hand in song,
> His library (where busts of poets dead
> And a true Pindar stood without a head)
> Received of wits an undistinguished race,
> Who first his judgment asked, and then a place;

Much they extolled his pictures, much his seat,
And flattered every day, and some day eat;
Till grown more frugal in his riper days
He paid some bards with port and some with praise.

These verses have little worth and simply exhibit the malevolence of the poet, who quarreled with and maligned every friend he ever had save Arbuthnot, Swift and Bolingbroke. Addison and Steele have left on record their estimate of Montague, and if they praised him as a poet too highly, as a man they gave him no greater credit than he deserved. He was the patron and rewarder of literature, and we owe to him much in that literature that is imperishable.

On the death of Queen Anne, Halifax became one of the regents of the government pending the arrival of George I., and soon after that monarch's accession he was made an earl, knight of the Garter and first commissioner of the treasury. He did not long enjoy his new honors. He died at the age of fifty-four and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

# BOLINGBROKE,

## WIT, ORATOR AND STATESMAN.

(1678–1751.)

Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things
To low ambition and the pride of kings.
Let us (since life can little more supply
Than just to look about us, and to die)
Expatiate free o'er all this scene of man;
A mighty maze, but not without a plan.

Such are the opening lines, as everybody knows, of Pope's "Essay on Man," though everybody may not know that the St. John to whom they were addressed was the celebrated Lord Bolingbroke, wit, orator and statesman, and that he not only inspired the poem, but in a great measure wrote out in prose the ideas contained in it. Indeed, it has been asserted that Bolingbroke originally composed the "Essay on Man" in prose and Pope turned it into rhyme. But this, as Dr. Johnson has said, is too strongly stated. The imagery of the poem is Pope's, though the philosophic basis is undoubtedly Bolingbroke's.

Of the great men of Queen Anne's reign Bolingbroke is one of the most interesting. Macaulay calls him a brilliant knave, but he was much more, if not better, than that. For many years, indeed, he led a wild and dissipated life and gained for himself the appellation of "the modern Alcibiades"; but he was a statesman, a scholar, a wit, the master of a superb English style and a political thinker and writer of great power. His name will always be associated with Pope and Swift. With the former he lived on terms of the most intimate friendship, while the latter was his most powerful lieutenant in those stormy times that marked the closing years of the reign of Queen Anne. Swift's writings, particularly the "Journal to Stella," are full of Bolingbroke, for whom he had a very great admiration. In one place he writes to Stella:

> I think Mr. St. John the greatest young man I ever knew: wit, capacity, beauty, quickness of apprehension, good learning and an excellent taste; the best orator in the House of Commons, admirable conversation, good nature and good manners; generous and a despiser of money. His only fault is talking to his friends in a way of complaint of too great a load of business, which looks a little like affectation; and he endeavors too much to mix the fine gentleman and man of pleasure with the man of business.

In another place he calls him "the greatest

commoner in England," and that parliament can do nothing without him.

Henry St. John, who subsequently was raised to the peerage as Viscount Bolingbroke, was born in 1678. His father was one of the roisterers of Charles II.'s time, and died an unreclaimed rake at the age of ninety in the reign of George II. On his mother's side St. John was descended from the Earl of Warwick, the kingmaker. He was brought up by his grandparents after a strictly religious fashion and was educated at Eton and Christ Church College, Oxford. He early attracted notice by his vivacity and versatility, his prodigious memory and his acquisition of knowledge. He equally attracted notice by his dissipations, excesses and profligacy while yet a stripling.

It was the fashion in those days for men of fashion and pleasure to cultivate the society of wits and men of letters, and St. John became intimate with Dryden in his declining years and with Pope, Swift, Addison, Steele and Prior as they were coming on the stage. He occasionally wrote verses of an ingenious and pleasing character, though not very notable as poetry. Some eulogistic lines from his pen are prefixed to Dryden's translation of Virgil.

As a youth he passed much time in Parisian society and acquired a complete mastery of the French language. At twenty-two he married an heiress, but the marriage was not a happy one, though Swift speaks in the highest terms of Mrs. St. John. "She is a great favorite of mine," he writes to Stella. But St. John would not give up his so-called pleasures, and long boasted of the power of his brain to stand unlimited quantities of burgundy and champagne. Lord Chesterfield wrote of him in his letters:

> His youth was distinguished by all the tumult and storm of pleasures, in which he licentiously triumphed, disdaining all decorum; but his convivial joys were pushed to all the extravagancy of frantic bacchanals. These passions were never interrupted but by a stronger ambition.

At the age of twenty-three he entered parliament and began his brilliant but meteoric political career.

It was a time of court intrigue and of bitter faction, but St. John soon rose to be the leader of his party in the House of Commons. Associated with him in the leadership of the Tories was Robert Harley, who subsequently became the Earl of Oxford. Macaulay calls Harley a "solemn trifler," but he possessed just those qualities that impressed parliament and fitted him

for leadership, in conjunction with such an orator as St. John.

The Whigs were in the ascendency, and the Duke of Marlborough and his wife were the favorites of Queen Anne, and all powerful at court. Harley and St. John enlisted the services of Dean Swift, and started a paper called the *Examiner*. At once a bitter attack, written in Swift's most trenchant style, was made upon the Marlboroughs and the Whigs, and continued week after week and month after month with unrelenting severity. Intrigues at court followed, and the Whig administration was overturned. Harley became prime minister and St. John secretary of state. It is unnecessary here to enter into the political questions and intrigues of the time, but the succession to Queen Anne was one of the chief issues—whether the house of Stuart should be restored, or the remotely related house of Hanover be brought over. St. John, Harley and Atterbury favored the Stuarts, while the Whigs supported the Elector of Hanover, who afterward became George I. As secretary of state St. John effected peace with France and for this service Queen Anne made him a peer, and thus he became Lord Bolingbroke.

Bolingbroke was now at the height of his

power and popularity. His grace and beauty of person made him one of the most fascinating of men, while his intellectual and oratorical ability made him all powerful in parliament. He was the model that Lord Chesterfield pointed to in his "Letters to His Son."

Lord Bolingbroke had both a tongue and a pen to persuade; his manner of speaking in private conversation was full as elegant as his writings; whatever subject he either spoke or wrote upon, he adorned with the most splendid eloquence—not studied or labored eloquence, but such a flowing happiness of diction, which (from care at first), had become so habitual to him that even his familiar conversations if taken down in writing would bear the press, without the least correction either as to method or style.

But when at the summit of greatness the ground began to give way beneath him. The queen lost confidence in him. She was a very narrow-minded person, and as Swift said, "had not a sufficient stock of amity for more than one person at a time. She was not old, but her health was failing. She had borne thirteen children and all were dead, and it was through her influence that the Catholic Stuarts were by act of parliament excluded from the succession,

though they were the nearest to her in blood, and the Protestant house of Hanover made successors to the throne.

Suddenly the queen died and all was in confusion. Atterbury implored Bolingbroke to have James III. proclaimed king at Charing Cross, but Bolingbroke was not willing to imperil his head in such a cause. The opportunity passed, George I. was proclaimed, and a new chapter opened in the career of Bolingbroke.

With the death of Queen Anne Bolingbroke's political power passed away, and his hostility to the Hanoverian succession had been so persistent that when George I. actually ascended the throne he began to fear for his head. It was a time when there was but little scruple among those ambitious of political power in sending a political opponent to the scaffold. Bolingbroke himself, when in the possession of high authority, had shown a most truculent spirit toward his Whig adversaries, though he did no more than threaten them. But now the wheel of fortune had brought the Whigs uppermost and Bolingbroke and his party were underneath. He took the oath to support the new king, but George looked coldly upon him. Nevertheless for a time he bore a dauntless and unruffled front, though the court

neglected him and his name was rarely spoken in public without obloquy. Then came threats of banishment, of confiscation, of the scaffold, and neither the fascination of high breeding nor the charm of oratory could restore to him his prestige. He resolved on flight, though flight was confession. On a great gala night he appeared at the theater, the observed of all observers. With his usual felicity he complimented the actors and called the manager to his box to bespeak the play for the next night. Before morning he was on his way to France in disguise, and a few days later reached Paris. Had he remained nothing could have been proved against him, and he would have been unmolested, as his associates were. But his flight encouraged his enemies, and parliament passed a bill of attainder against him and deprived him of his title and property.

For a few years he undertook to serve the Pretender, but it proved to be a thankless office, and the petty intrigues of a pseudo court finally disgusted him. He was a man ambitious of power, but it must be actual power. The baubles, the trappings and the pretensions of office had no charm for him. When he found it was all merely make-believe at the court of the Pretender, and that it was impossible to cure James of his frivol-

ity, or to stimulate in him the noble ambition to be a king indeed, he withdrew and devoted himself thenceforth to literature. The last half of his life was by far its happiest portion.

In the first years of Bolingbroke's exile his wife died. Her affection he had long treated with contempt, and at the last she was completely estranged from him, although she had shown in his great reverses much wifely devotion. He now made a second marriage with the Marquise Villette, a Frenchwoman, which was more auspicious. With this marriage his lawless gallantry and dissipation ended. To the ability and persistence of the second Lady Bolingbroke, to her resolute devotion and supple wit, re-enforced by a large part of her fortune, the banished statesman owed his restoration to his native land. The king at last pardoned him, and after nine years of exile he returned to England. But Walpole, who had long been his enemy, was still powerful enough to keep him out of the House of Lords. His estates were restored, but not his honors, and he was not suffered to enter parliament. A greater compliment to the power of oratory was never paid to any statesman.

He now settled at a place called Dawley, near Twickenham, where Pope resided, and entered

upon the second and less tempestuous part of his great career. He dispensed a generous hospitality and became once more the patron of wits and scholars. He was in almost daily converse with Pope, who was ten years his junior, and who looked up to Bolingbroke with a reverence and devotion he never exhibited toward any other human being. The fallen statesman's romantic history, his capacious intellect, his haughty and ambitious spirit, his vast knowledge of men and books, the enchantment of his address and his magnificent presence fascinated the delicate and sensitive poet as by a spell. Hitherto Pope had not exhibited his highest poetic powers. He had become involved in literary feuds and had revenged himself on his enemies by the "Dunciad," but the scandal and filth of Grub-street were unworthy of his genius, no matter how brilliant his wit or terrible his satire. Bolingbroke directed him to higher and nobler aims and encouraged him to emulate Lucretius and Horace. Bolingbroke sketched the plan of the "Essay on Man," and his influence and guidance may be detected in all of Pope's subsequent writings.

At Dawley, Arbuthnot and Gay were often entertained and the satires of the one and the poetry of the other discussed, criticised and improved.

In 1726 Swift paid a visit to Bolingbroke, bringing with him the manuscript of "Gulliver's Travels." It was Swift's first visit to England since Queen Anne's death had retired him to his deanery in Dublin. "Gulliver" excited mirth among the friends, and once during a temporary absence Bolingbroke addressed a letter to Pope, Swift and Gay, as the three yahoos of Twickenham.

During these happy months in which for the last time Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, Gay and Bolingbroke met together under the same roof Voltaire also became a visitor, and, indeed, Dawley was almost a home to him during the two years he remained in England. In Bolingbroke's library he made himself familiar with English literature, science and philosophy and learned to write the language vigorously and well. There, too, he sketched some of his own finest works, and when he returned to Paris he dedicated to Bolingbroke his play of "Brutus," the most spirited of his tragedies. During Voltaire's stay "Gulliver's Travels" was published and the Frenchman enjoyed the Lilliputians and the Brobdingnagians quite as heartily and admired them as much as did the Englishmen.

During all this time, and, indeed, from the

time he ruptured his connection with the Pretender, and before he returned to England, Bolingbroke himself was a voluminous writer. His first considerable work is entitled "A Letter to Sir William Windham," and was written soon after he went into exile. It is a defense of his conduct and career. Then followed his "Reflections on Exile," "A Patriot King," "Dissertation on Parties," "Letters on History," "True Use of Retirement and Study," "The Spirit of Patriotism" and certain philosophical and religious criticisms, the latter being published after his death. They are all written in a style that marks a turning point in our literature, for their influence on English prose was instantaneous and abiding. There had been masters of style before Bolingbroke. There had been the "Judicious Hooker" and Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Brown and John Milton, Dryden, De Foe and Addison, but Bolingbroke surpassed them all in eloquent expression. His style comes as near perfection as can be imagined, and is distinguished by its elevation, perspicuity, musical charm and picturesqueness. It combines the graces of colloquial ease with the graces of rhetorical illustration. Its interest never flags, its imagery never palls, its felicities are a constant succession of surprises,

and bring a glow to the cheek and a gleam to the eye of every intelligent reader.

Burke was a profound student of Bolingbroke, and acquired his own superb style through that study, and one can trace in the writings of Goldsmith, Gibbon, Hume and Macaulay the obligations of those writers to the author of "The Letters on History." He was, in truth, one of the first of prose writers to develop the resources and exhibit the opulence of our splendid English tongue. He lived long enough to see all his early friends and his beloved second wife precede him to the grave—one of the penalties of long life. In his last years he was a cripple from gout and rheumatism, and he died in 1751 of a malignant cancer. Nevertheless he faced death with the utmost composure. He was in his seventy-third year.

# JOHN GAY,

## AUTHOR OF "THE BEGGAR'S OPERA."

(1685–1732.)

Of all the celebrities known in literary history as the Queen Anne's men, the name we most frequently meet with is that of John Gay. Not that he was chief or even second among them, but he was one whom they all appreciated and loved. He was the friend of Addison and of Steele, of Pope and of Swift, of Arbuthnot and of Prior, and he has this particular merit, that Pope never quarreled with or satirized him.

This proves his affectionate and amiable nature, though Dr. Johnson says that his associates regarded him "as a playfellow rather than a partner, and treated him with more fondness than respect." Nevertheless he was entitled to and received the respect of his associates because of his own intellectual abilities, and there was no place in his career where he did not have and deserve their friendship.

He is remembered now because of his authorship of "The Beggar's Opera" and of certain "Fables" in verse. Many of the latter are tales or allegories that abound in touches of humor and are written in the simplest and easiest of styles. Few satires are better than the story of "The Hare and Many Friends:"

> A Hare who, in a civil way
> Complied with everything, like Gay.

Every animal was the friend of the Hare, but when the hounds were in pursuit of her, each animal made excuse when applied to for assistance. She applied half fainting to the horse to help her. If she could but mount his back so that her feet would not betray her she might escape, but the horse advised her to seek other friends. And so she went the rounds of the bull, the goat, the sheep and the calf—was rejected by all and became the victim of their friendship.

Gay's greatest literary success, and the work by which he will be longest remembered is "The Beggar's Opera," one of those epoch-making plays that seem to change the course of events and of society. It was a play that brought Newgate on the stage, and in a measure apotheosized

crime, but critics to this day are not in accord as to its influence, whether for good or evil. The hero was Captain Macheath, who most assuredly came to grief.

The piece was intended as a satire on the then style of Italian opera, while it ridiculed the leading politicians and statesmen of the day, as well as attacked the corruption of the court.

Hogarth has preserved by his art the scene in which Macheath, with Polly on one side and Lucy on the other, sung:

> How happy I could be with either
> Were t'other dear charmer away.

The piece was received with immense favor, and Gay became the most noted author of the day. Swift commended the piece for the excellence of its morality and that it placed all kinds of vice in the strongest and most odious light; but others censured it as having a tendency to make heroes out of highwaymen. The author himself satirically says in the epilogue:

> Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen.

This, too, is a question that has been submitted to many generations and is even yet not answered.

Gay was one of those happy-go-lucky fellows whom everybody wished well. He published a volume of poems by subscription and received one thousand pounds, One friend advised him to invest in the funds and live upon the interest; Pope and Swift urged him to purchase an annuity, but Arbuthnot bade him intrust it to Providence and live upon the principal, and this being in accord with his own tastes, he followed the advice. When the South Sea bubble was at its height a powerful friend presented him with stock representing twenty thousand pounds. His friends urged him to sell out immediately, but he would not do it, dreaming of dignity and splendor. He was then importuned to sell as much as would purchase one hundred pounds a year for life, which would insure him "a clean shirt and a shoulder of mutton every day"; but he still refused. The result was that when the bubble burst both profit and principal were lost.

Gay's most ambitious poem is entitled "Trivia; or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London," and while it does not rank high as poetry it is of the greatest interest to the students

of history as descriptive of the manners of the English people nearly two centuries ago.

Gay died in 1732 and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

# MATTHEW PRIOR,

POET AND HUMORIST.

(1664–1721.)

AMONG the lesser of the Queen Anne's men who held a high place with the wits and was the friend and associate of Bolingbroke, Swift, Pope, Addison, Steele, Gay and Congreve, was Matthew Prior. Gay calls him "dear Prior, beloved of every muse." Swift frequently mentions him in the journal to Stella. "Mr. Prior walks to make himself fat and I to keep myself down. We often walk round the park together." Prior was very facetious in conversation and a great punster, and he and Swift were adepts at that rather low form of humor. When some noble lord refused to associate with Prior because he was meanly born he wrote the following verse as his own epitaph:

Nobles and heralds by your leave,
Here lies what once was Matthew Prior,
The son of Adam and Eve;
Can Bourbon or Nassau claim higher?

He was a man of society, a gallant, an accomplished man of the world, a pleasant story-teller, but not refined; epicurean in his tastes, with a fine facility for graceful and sometimes noble verse. Though he lived in a somewhat more decorous time, his manners smacked of the Restoration and he would have been a boon companion of Rochester, Sedley and Buckingham. He was born in 1664, three years before Swift, was educated at Westminster School and Cambridge University, and, going to London after taking his degree, he joined Charles Montague, afterward Earl of Halifax, in a burlesque on Dryden's poem, "The Hind and the Panther." It made such a hit as a political satire that Prior was immediately taken care of by the ministry in power. Those were happy days for the men who could write graceful English or turn neat verses. Good places under the government were bestowed upon them, and they led lives of honor and profit.

It was Prior's good fortune to be made secretary of the embassy at The Hague, and by and by he rose in the diplomatic service and was appointed to the high position of ambassador to Paris. It was while William III. was king that Prior, having been shown the palace of Versailles with the victories of Louis XIV. painted on the

walls, was asked whether the palace of the King of England had any such decorations. His reply was: "The monuments of my master's actions are to be seen everywhere except in his own house"—a right noble response, indeed.

Prior held his position until the death of Queen Anne, when he was recalled and suffered eclipse with his patrons and friends. But he did not suffer poverty, for his poems brought him in four thousand pounds and Lord Harley gave him four thousand pounds more, and with this he purchased a small estate and lived comfortably until his death in 1721 at the age of sixty-seven.

Dr. Johnson did not speak favorably of Prior's lyrics, and once when Mrs. Thrale disputed with him on the merits of Prior's amorous ditties, which he despised, he silenced her by saying, "My dear lady, talk no more of this. Nonsense can be defended by nonsense." At another time, however, he praised Prior's tales, some of which are very coarse and indelicate, in the highest terms, calling Prior a "lady's book," saying "no lady is ashamed to have it standing in her library." But here the great doctor is undoubtedly wrong.

Thackeray praises Prior's lyrics very highly, as "among the easiest, the richest, the most charmingly humorous of English lyrical poems.

Horace is always in his mind; and his song and his philosophy, his good sense, his happy easy turns and melody, his loves and his epicureanism bear a great resemblance to that most delightful and accomplished master."

Prior addressed some pleasing verses to Lord Halifax, which dwell on the vanity of human wishes, two stanzas of which are familiar:

So whilst in fevered dreams we sink,
And waking taste what we desire;
The dream is better than the drink,
The real draught but feeds the fire.

Our hopes like towering falcons aim
At objects in an airy height;
The little pleasure of the game
Is from afar to view the flight.

His epigrams are always neatly turned and are still worth reading:

On his deathbed poor Lubin lies,
His spouse is in despair;
With frequent sobs and mutual cries
They both express their care.

"A different cause," says Parson Sly,
"The same effect may give
Poor Lubin fears that he shall die,
His wife that he may live."

His most ambitious poem perhaps is "Solo-

mon on the Vanity of the World." It is on the theme of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." It is bold, philosophical and full of warmth, rich word painting and passion. Solomon relates how vainly he has questioned the learned, and proposed his doubts to the lettered Rabbins; how he has been equally unfortunate in his desire of love and the possession of power, and ends by saying that trust only can be reposed in an "omniscient master and omnipresent king."

Many of the lines are often quoted:

Abra was ready ere I called her name;
And though I called another, Abra came.

For hope is but the dream of those that wake.

Who dreams must suffer, and who thinks must mourn,
And he alone is bless'd who ne'er was born.

His other serious poem is "Alma," which is a discourse on the seat of the soul, replete with skepticism and materialism. It is extremely coarse in passages, and not particularly convincing, though Voltaire has used the same arguments.

# JOHN ARBUTHNOT,

## WISEST AND WITTIEST OF DOCTORS.

(1667–1735.)

AFTER the lapse of more than a hundred and fifty years the collected works of Dr. John Arbuthnot have been published, and writings which have always been ascribed to Swift or to Pope have at last found their proper author. Not but what students of Queen Anne's time knew all about Dr. Arbuthnot, for his name is preserved in the memoirs and letters of that period, but one had to make a special search for his works among the writings of his contemporaries, for he was absolutely indifferent to his own fame. He was the friend of Swift and Pope, of Addison and Steele, of Gay and Congreve, and these as well as many others have left their testimony concerning his wit and learning and intellectual vigor.

Swift said that Arbuthnot could do everything but walk—he had a bad and slouching gait—and

Pope declared that of all the men he had met with or heard of, Dr. Arbuthnot had the most prolific wit, being superior in that respect to Swift. In his life of Pope, Dr. Johnson says:

It is to be regretted that either honor or pleasure should have been missed by Dr. Arbuthnot, a man estimable for his learning, amiable for his life and venerable for his piety. He was a man of great comprehension, skilful in his profession, versed in the sciences, acquainted with ancient literature and able to animate his mass of knowledge by a bright and active imagination; a scholar with great brilliancy of wit; a wit who, in the crowd of life, discovered and retained a noble ardor of religious zeal.

On another occasion, talking of the eminent writers of Queen Anne's reign, Johnson observed:

I think Dr. Arbuthnot the first man among them. He was the most universal genius, being an excellent physician, a man of deep learning and a man of much humor.

The same opinion has been expressed by many others. "His imagination," says Lord Chesterfield in one of his letters, "was almost inexhaustible, and his knowledge at everyone's service; charity, benevolence and a love of mankind appeared unaffectedly in all he said and did." Macaulay praises him for writing "the most ingenious and humorous political satire extant in

our language," while Thackeray says he was "one of the wisest, wittiest, most accomplished, gentlest of mankind."

He was born in Scotland in 1667 and educated at Aberdeen. After taking his degree in medicine he established himself in London, where he rapidly gained a reputation for skill in his profession and as a man of science. Before he was thirty he was appointed a court physician, and had apartments in St. James's Palace. He became the favorite physician of Queen Anne. He soon acquired the friendship of all the eminent men of the day, and attended Swift, Pope, Congreve and Gay. One of the finest of Pope's poems, "The Epistle to Doctor Arbuthnot," expresses much gratitude to him:

> Friend to my life, which did not you prolong,
> The world had wanted many an idle song.

In Dublin Swift laments:

> Removed from kind Arbuthnot's aid,
> Who knows his art but not his trade,
> Preferring his regard for me
> Before his credit or his fee.

"If there were a dozen Arbuthnots in the world," writes Swift to Pope, "I would burn my 'Travels,'" meaning the Gulliver writings. And

again he says: "The doctor has more wit than we all have, and his humanity is equal to his wit."

Arbuthnot was a great Tory and took much interest in the politics of the day. His greatest satire, so highly praised by Macaulay, is "The History of John Bull." It was published in 1712, and was aimed at the Duke of Marlborough, who was then all-powerful because of his victories over the French, and charged him with prolonging the war between France and England to make money out of it. John Bull, a name invented by Arbuthnot for England, is an honest clothier, and Nic Frog (Holland) is a linen draper, who has always furnished drapery to the Lord Strutts (Spain). It having come to the knowledge of John Bull and Nic Frog that young Lord Strutt is about to transfer his custom to old Lewis Baboon (France), they threaten him with a lawsuit and put their case in the hands of an attorney, Humphrey Hocus (the Duke of Marlborough). The suit is brought and waged for years, with no apparent result except that the attorney grows richer all the time at the expense of his clients, or rather of John Bull, who has obligated himself to pay the costs. Everybody is represented as making something out of the suit except honest John, whose ready money,

bonds and mortgages all go into the attorney's pocket.

So keen was the satire and so easily recognized the points made that the whole nation roared with laughter. Sir Walter Scott says: "It was scarcely possible so effectually to dim the luster of Marlborough's splendid achievements as by parodying them under the history of a suit conducted by a wily attorney who made every advantage gained over the defendant a reason for protracting law procedure and enhancing the expense of his client."

The effect of the satire was that parliament soon made peace with France and Spain, and Marlborough was driven from power.

The "Memoirs of Martin Scriblerus" is another of Arbuthnot's amusing satires and is aimed at pedantry and quackery. The votaries of "mind cure" and "faith cure" will find in it some anticipation of their systems.

Dr. Arbuthnot died in 1735, after a happy and prosperous life. Pope and Chesterfield were with him in his last moments. Swift wrote: "The deaths of Mr. Gay and the doctor have been terrible wounds near my heart."

# THE KIT-KAT,

## FAMOUS LITERARY CLUB.

One of the most famous clubs in English literary and political history was the Kit-Kat, which flourished in the days of Queen Anne, and embraced in its membership some of the most eminent and brilliant men of that period. There have been other clubs as famous, such as the Mermaid of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson's time, and the Literary Club, founded by Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds, which has survived to the present day; but the Kit-Kat is more peculiarly associated with history than either of the others. Allusions to the Kit-Kat are to be found in the writings of Addison, Steele, Arbuthnot, Pope and many others of the wits of the time. Many of the great nobles belonged to it, men famous in history, such as the Dukes of Marlborough, Richmond, Somerset, Grafton and Devonshire, Lord Somers, Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, and Sir Robert Walpole, and with these were associated literary men such as

Congreve, Vanbrugh, Addison, Steele and Garth. Bolingbroke was a member for a time, but it was a Whig club politically and Tories found it uncongenial. Jacob Tonson, the most noted of English book publishers of that day, was the secretary of the club. He was called the "chief merchant of the muses," because he was the friend of poets and published their works when other booksellers would not. He was Dryden's publisher, and he brought out Rowe's edition of Shakespeare, which, it will be remembered, was the beginning of modern Shakespearean criticism. Tonson deserves well of posterity also because he had the portraits of the members of the club painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller, the most celebrated artist of that day. He built a room adjoining his residence, where the club met in the summer. The panels of the room did not admit of full length portraits and a shorter canvas was adopted, which since that day has been known in the nomenclature of art as the "Kit-Kat size." These portraits are still preserved, and were exhibited at the London International Exhibition of 1862.

The origin of the name of the club has been somewhat disputed. Dr. Arbuthnot wrote the following epigram about it:

Whence deathless Kit-Kat took his name
  Few critics can unriddle ;
Some say from pastry-cook it came,
  And some from Cat and Fiddle.
From no trim beaus its name it boasts.
  Gray statesmen or green wits,
But from this pell-mell pack of toasts
  Of old Cats and young Kits.

The last lines refer to the practice of the club of toasting the belles and beauties of the day. It had its toasting glasses, inscribed with a verse or toast to some of the fine ladies, favorites at court or in society.

A reasonable derivation of the name is from Christopher Cat, who kept the house where the club usually met. The place was noted for its mutton pies, one of the standing dishes at the club suppers. These pies became famous in London, and were called kit-kats—a rather ominous name for a meat pie. There is a prologue to a comedy written in 1700 in which occurs the line :

A kit-kat is a supper for a lord.

In an old book called " The Secret History of Clubs " it is stated that the club met at a tavern which had the sign of Cat and Fiddle, the name of the keeper being Christopher, who not only

made very toothsome dishes, but affected also the company of poets. The book goes on to say that a new set of authors were invited there to a "collation of oven trumpery," where they were nobly entertained. This grew into a weekly meeting, and the cook's name being Christopher, for brevity called Kit, and his sign being the Cat and Fiddle, the name of Kit-Kat Club was thus derived.

But however derived, it was a most notable association of eminent men whose names are now familiar to all readers of English literature.

The Kit-Kat is also famous as the place where Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu, most renowned of English women, made her début in society. She was then Lady Mary Pierrepont and was but eight years old. Her father, the Earl of Kingston, was a prominent member of the club, and one day the whim seized him to nominate his beautiful little daughter as a reigning toast for the year. The other members demurred because they had not seen her. "Then you shall see her," he replied, and sent orders home to have her finely dressed and brought to the tavern. She was received with acclamation, her health drunk and her name engraved in due form upon a drinking glass. She was passed from the arms of one poet or peer

to the lap of another, and caressed and praised for her beauty and wit in terms she never forgot. Pleasure was too poor a word to express her sensations. It was ecstasy. During her long life as a beauty, wit and genius she ever looked back to that day as the happiest of her life. Her picture was painted for the club and she was duly enrolled as a regular toast.

Many another scene of wit and jollity was witnessed in that low-ceiled room in the more than thirty years the club existed. There the vain but able Montague talked with the brilliant Somers of their political plans and boasted how he could wind the House of Commons around his fingers. There, too, he toasted the gay and witty Miss Barton, niece of Sir Isaac Newton:

> Beauty and wit strove, each in vain,
> To vanquish Bacchus and his train;
> But Barton with successful charms,
> From both their quivers drew her arms.
> The roving god his sway resigns
> And awfully submits his vines.

In that charmed circle were to be met the witty Congreve—the wittiest and most pleasing gentleman, Lady Mary says, she ever knew—and Addison, the silent, until the bottle unlocked his tongue and made him the most charming of com-

panions; and Steele, ever ready to drink Addison up to the point of companionship, and Vanbrugh, dramatist and architect, who designed Blenheim Castle. For him the wits made a mock epitaph which runs:

> Lie heavy on him, earth, for he
> Laid many a heavy load on thee.

Dr. Samuel Garth, who wrote poetry of a mediocre sort, but sufficient to give him a place in Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," was also a member and enlivened the company with toasts and wit. He was a better doctor than poet and was court physician to George I. One night going to the club he declared he must soon be gone, having many patients to attend. The bottle circulating freely, he forgot them, until Steele reminded him of the visits he had yet to pay. Garth pulled out his list, which numbered fifteen. Glancing them over he said: "It is no great matter whether I see them to-night or not. Nine of them have such bad constitutions that all the physicians in the world can't save them, and the other six have such good constitutions that all the physicians in the world can't kill them." So he resumed his toasts and his bottle.

The anecdotes of the club and its members are many, but scattered through numerous volumes. No account of the wits of Queen Anne would be complete without some notice of this most celebrated club.

# LADY MARY WORTLEY-MONTAGU.

(1690–1762.)

A GENERATION or a little more ago most well-informed people would easily understand any reference to "Lady Mary," for among the countless Lady Marys that at one time or another adorned English society there was but one who had won distinction both for her genius and beauty. It is doubtful whether she is so well known to-day, and if it is your intention to speak of the great English letter-writer of the eighteenth century it is necessary to give her full name—Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu.

Next to Horace Walpole, who did not love her nor she him, Lady Mary is the most eminent letter-writer in the English language, and it is to her we owe those pictures of society in the days of Queen Anne and of the first Georges that show us so plainly what manner of men and women our ancestors were. She paints like an

impressionist and her brush is large and often coarse, but there the picture stands, never to be forgotten. She saw the humorous as well as the serious side of life, with an eye quick to see the grotesqueries and follies of the people about her, and she set them down in very plain black and white. If she has to relate some matter of gossip or a coarse anecdote she is never indecent like Pope or filthy like Swift. Her humor and honesty atone for the broadness of the tale, and one only perceives that in the days of our great-great-great-grandfathers a spade was called a spade, and women of the highest culture and refinement occasionally spiced their conversation with a Rabelaisian story or two that is not customary at this day.

Her education was very irregularly conducted. She had the freedom of her father's library and read widely. She learned Latin and Greek, which girls in her time were not supposed to attempt, and acquired a knowledge of French and Italian. The person she relied on to assist her was Edward Wortley, whom she subsequently married. "When I was young," she says in one of her letters, "I was a great admirer of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' and that was one of the chief reasons that set me upon thoughts of stealing the

Latin language. Mr. Wortley was the only person to whom I communicated my design, and he encouraged me in it. I used to study five or six hours a day for two years in my father's library, and got that language whilst everybody else thought I was reading nothing but novels and romances."

Mr. Wortley, who became Mr. Wortley-Montagu, was a very rich, a very orderly, a very obstinate and a very dull person, considerably older than his young and lively pupil, but not too dull to fall in love with her. He was a most unexceptionable match, and Lord Dorchester fully approved of it, until the question of "settlements" came up. Lord Dorchester wished a larger provision to be made for the benefit of the children of the marriage, if there should be any, and Mr. Wortley Montagu refused to make any such "settlement." Whereupon the father broke off the match and ordered his daughter to see her lover no more. This naturally increased her desire to see him, and after a little time she eloped with and married him. He was prominent in the politics of the time, and when the death of Queen Anne occurred and the Whigs came into power Mr. Wortley presented his wife at court and introduced her to his friends, Congreve,

Addison, Steele and Pope, by whom she was greatly admired and praised—by Mr. Pope in particular, who wrote some pleasing and complimentary verses to her. Mr. Wortley was soon appointed ambassador to Constantinople and thither he took his wife and their young son, traveling leisurely across Europe, by way of Rotterdam, The Hague, Bologne, Nuremberg, Ratisbon and Vienna, to his post.

It was at Rotterdam that Lady Mary began that career of letter-writing since so famous. She wrote to her sister, the Countess of Mar, to Mr. Pope and to others, giving the description of her travels, the language, the manners and the customs of the countries through which she passed. She was a close observer, and little escaped her notice. She described the fashions at Vienna, copied Latin inscriptions on the monuments of Stamboul, told of her dinner with a grand vizier's lady and wrote a very plain-spoken account of the baths of Sophia. She also visited and saw "as much of the seraglio as is to be seen," which was not much. She wore the Turkish costume, and had her miniature painted in it, and copied Turkish verses for the benefit of Mr. Pope.

At Constantinople her daughter, who subsequently became the Countess of Bute, was born,

and Lady Mary, who had learned the system of inoculation for the smallpox then in vogue in Constantinople, had both of her children successfully inoculated, and she proclaimed far and wide the blessings and safety of the system. The party now returned to England, and Lady Mary became for the time the most noted woman in Europe. She was the first of woman travelers and tourists, and had written most charming descriptions of the countries through which she had passed. She had brought back an antidote against the smallpox, which gave her a great reputation as a humanitarian. Above all she was learned, witty and beautiful, an ornament to any society, and from that time on for many years she was a leader not only in high social but in literary circles. Her husband, whose tastes were far apart from hers, took a villa for her at Twickenham, next door to Mr. Pope's, and a good deal of letter-writing and poetry passed between the poet and Lady Mary, and for some years they appeared to be very good friends. Meantime she kept up her correspondence with her sister, the Countess of Mar, who was obliged to live in Paris, her husband being a Jacobite. It is in these letters that all the gossip and scandal of London society are related in the plainest of

language, for the edification and delight of her dear sister, and with but little thought that posterity would peep over her sister's shoulders and read those letters.

Then came the quarrel with Pope, world renowned since, the cause of which has never clearly been made known. They went at each other in the most unscrupulous, scandalous and indecent manner, calling vile names and using every epithet in the vocabulary of Billingsgate. Lady Mary got much the worst of it, as everyone did who came to an encounter of wits with the crooked little poet—"the wicked wasp of Twickenham."

For the next twenty years of her life Lady Mary lived in France or Italy, her husband not accompanying her, though always proposing to do so. It was a sort of decent separation of husband and wife, at last grown perfectly uncongenial.

After her husband's death she returned to England, aged and broken in health. She did not long survive. It was not until nearly a century after her death that her complete works were collected and published by her grandson, Lord Wharncliffe.

# NICHOLAS ROWE,

## DRAMATIST AND POET-LAUREATE.

(1674–1718.)

EVERY student of Shakespeare feels, or ought to feel, some obligation to the memory of Nicholas Rowe, who was the first of the modern editors of Shakespeare and the first of his biographers. He it was who rescued from tradition those stories of Shakespeare's life that were still related in the greenrooms of the theaters by actors who had known and conversed with the actors of Shakespeare's own time. Rowe was on intimate terms with Betterton, who was the friend of Davenant, who had lived on familiar terms with Ben Jonson and as a child had known Shakespeare. It was from Betterton that Rowe received the most of the information on which his biography of the great dramatist was based. Rowe's edition of Shakespeare proved to be an immense stimulus to the study of the plays.

But Rowe is entitled to be remembered on his own account as well, for although not a great poet or a remarkable dramatist he wrote plays that continued to be represented on the stage for more than a hundred years after his death, and might still be seen if the old system of stock companies were still in force. Down to within living memory the leading characters in his plays were favorites with the great tragic actors and actresses in every generation since they were written.

Nicholas Rowe was born in Bedfordshire, England, in 1674, and was educated for the bar, his father being a distinguished barrister and a sergeant-at-law of that period. Nicholas was inclined to court the muses rather than the more jealous mistress, and his father dying when he was nineteen, leaving him a moderate income, he straightway abandoned the law and devoted himself to literature. He became the friend of Pope and associated with Swift, Addison, Steele and Prior, and when he was twenty-six his first tragedy, "The Ambitious Stepmother," was produced. The play was successful, not so much on account of its own merit as that Betterton, Booth, Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle appeared in it and exerted their superb powers in the representation. It is a play that has not enough poetic fire in it

to make it interesting to the reader, but, like all of Rowe's plays except his comedy, the dramatic situations gave it success on the stage.

Rowe's next production was "Tamerlane," which in accordance with the fashion of the time, under a cloak of ancient characters and manners, contained many allusions to the political situation of the day. Tamerlane, the hero, was intended as a representation of William III., clothed with every amiable and majestic virtue; Bajazet, his rival, was Louis XIV., and upon him is heaped every ignoble trait. It was brought out just on the eve of King William's death in 1702, but it proved to be very popular and became a stock piece. From 1702 down to 1815 it was given annually on the Fifth of November, which was the anniversary of the landing in England of William, Prince of Orange, and also of Guy Faux's gunpowder plot. The play to some extent was founded on Marlowe's great tragedy of "Tamburlane," but there is nothing in common between Marlowe's commanding but stony-hearted hero and Rowe's calm and philosophic prince. Rowe utterly failed in portraying the historic character, and Gibbon, when describing that personage, says with a tinge of sarcasm: "Except in Rowe's Fifth of November play, I did not ex-

pect to hear of Timour's amiable moderation." In his life of Rowe, Dr. Johnson says:

This was the tragedy which Rowe valued most, and that which probably, by the help of political auxiliaries, excited most applause; but occasional poetry must often content itself with occasional praise. "Tamerlane" has for a long time been acted only once a year, on the night when King William landed. Our quarrel with Louis has been long over; and it now gratifies neither zeal nor malice to see him painted with aggravated features, like a Saracen upon a sign.

Rowe's next production was "The Fair Penitent," in 1703, the history of which is full of interest. It held the stage even down to our own times, and was always a favorite with the theater-going public. The critics have spoken well of it also, and Dr. Johnson said:

"The Fair Penitent" is one of the most pleasing tragedies on the stage, where it still keeps its turns of appearing, and probably will long keep them, for there is scarcely any work of any poet at once so interesting by the fable and so delightful by the language. The story is domestic, and therefore easily received by the imagination, and assimilated to common life; the diction is exquisitely harmonious, and soft or sprightly as occasion requires.

Johnson failed to note that Rowe stole the plot, characters and story of his play from Massinger's "Fatal Dowry." He changed the

names of the characters and shifted the locality of the play from Dijon to Genoa, and of course did not use Massinger's language, but the ideas are the same.

It shows how ignorant the public of Queen Anne's time was of the Elizabethans, that a playwright could so deliberately appropriate one of the greatest of the old tragedies, after Shakespeare's, and pass it off as his own without detection. In fact, it does not seem to have been discovered until after Dr. Johnson's day. Toward the end of the eighteenth century Richard Cumberland analyzed the two plays and showed Rowe's indebtedness to Massinger. As a dramatic poem "The Fatal Dowry" is far superior to "The Fair Penitent," but it contains scenes that would hardly be tolerated in Queen Anne's days and not at all in ours. Nevertheless "The Fatal Dowry," with suitable alterations, was often seen on the English stage during Samuel Phelps' career.

The "Fair Penitent" contains several passages often quoted :

> At length the morn and cold indifference came,
>
> Is she not more than painting can express,
> Or youthful poets fancy when they love ?
>
> Is this that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario ?

Lothario, as the name of a typical gallant, derives from this play and has been so used since Rowe's time.

Dr. Johnson thought that Rowe made the character too attractive, and says: "Lothario, with a gayety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be despised, retains too much of the spectator's kindness." In Massinger's play the gallant of the piece is made entirely despicable. Lothario was the prototype of Richardson's Lovelace but no reader of "Clarissa Harlowe" has anything but detestation for the "scoundrelly Lovelace," as Macaulay calls him.

"The Fair Penitent" is notable also in theatrical annals as one of the plays in which Garrick and Quin measured their powers against each other. Quin belonged to the old school of actors, whose orotund elocution and mechanical "business" had long been considered the only perfect manner on the stage. Garrick rushed into the arena fresh from the school of nature and upset all the traditions. "If that young man is right," said Quin on one occasion, "Then we are all wrong."

It was not an uncommon thing in that day for actors and actresses to appear in rival parts in the same play and appeal for the supremacy to the

audience. Quin and Garrick were pitted against each other in "The Fair Penitent," Quin as Horatio, the friend of Altamont, and Garrick as Lothario.

Quin had undoubtedly a little the best of the situation, as representing the cause of truth and virtue against profligacy. The night of their appearance the theater was packed, and when Horatio and Lothario met on the stage together in the second act the applause was so loud and so often repeated that both actors were disconcerted and much embarrassed. Quin afterward would not admit it, but Garrick confessed and said: "Faith, Quin was as much frightened as myself." Notwithstanding the disparity in the rôles from the moral point of view, Garrick's portrayal of the brave and almost heroic Lothario, graceful, debonair and handsome, carried the audience, while his impassioned elocution won the plaudits over the more deliberate expression of Quin.

When at the end of the second act Lothario challenges Horatio—

> West of the town a mile, among the rocks,
> Two hours ere noon, to-morrow, I expect thee—
> Thy single hand to mine—

Quin's slowly measured answer, "I'll meet

thee there," dragged so heavily in contrast with Garrick's passionate tones that while he was delivering it one of the gallery gods cried out, "Why don't you tell the gentleman whether you will meet him or not?" which set the audience in a roar. The play was repeated a number of times, but Garrick maintained his supremacy over his older rival.

Rowe was a man of many accomplishments, a master of polite learning, with a thorough knowledge of classical, French, Italian and Spanish literatures. That he was well versed in the Elizabethan literature, which most of his contemporaries were not, is evident from his plagiary of Massinger and his edition of Shakespeare. This of itself was a liberal education.

He was a very fine reader and Mrs. Oldfield used to say that the best instruction for an actress was to hear Rowe read her part in a new play.

In 1704 Rowe undertook a comedy which he called "The Biter"—that is, one given to hoaxing. It is, perhaps, the dreariest of comic plays ever presented on the stage and was most effectually and effectively damned on its first presentation. Of this piece Johnson says: "He ventured on a comedy and produced 'The Biter,' with which, though it was unfavorably treated by

the audience, he was himself delighted, for he is said to have sat in the house laughing with great vehemence whenever he had in his own opinion produced a jest; but finding that he and the public had no sympathy of mirth, he tried at lighter scenes no more." His next attempt was a classical tragedy, "Ulysses," in which Betterton played the title rôle and Mrs. Barry the heroine, Penelope, and they insured the success of the play, but after the first run the performance was never repeated. "The Royal Convert," founded upon an ancient British legend, was his next production, and this, like its predecessor, owed its only success to the actors, who were Booth, Wilks and Mrs. Oldfield. The final lines spoken by Mrs. Oldfield in the character of Ethelreda, panegyrized Queen Anne, after the fashion of the panegyric of Queen Elizabeth in Shakespeare's "Henry VIII."

Rowe's next play, "Jane Shore," was, after "The Fair Penitent," the most successful of his plays, and continued to be given on the English stage for nearly one hundred and fifty years. One of the last great English actors to produce it was Samuel Phelps, who died in 1878. In this play and in his next, "Lady Jane Grey," Rowe declared that he had taken Shakespeare for his model. Of course, he

nowhere reaches Shakespearean heights, but there is great dignity in the presentation, and in "Jane Shore" particularly much pathos.

Rowe was a politician as well as poet, and ambitious of advancement in office. It seems that he applied to Lord Oxford, lord treasurer under Queen Anne, for public employment. Oxford advised him to study Spanish; and when, sometime afterward, he came again and said he had mastered it, the lord treasurer dismissed him with this congratulation: "Then, sir, I envy you the pleasure of reading 'Don Quixote' in the original." The story is well authenticated and is related in Spencer's "Anecdotes," as coming from Pope.

When George I. succeeded Anne in 1714 and Oxford, Swift and the Tories generally were sent to the right about, Rowe was appointed poet-laureate, and thenceforth his literary work consisted mainly of annual odes in commemoration of a fat king, who could not read them. And no one has much cared to read them since. He died December, 1718, and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

# COLLEY CIBBER.

(1671–1757.)

THERE are so-called poets more or less famed for their dulness that one should know as well as those who are renowned for their verse. Some of them have been the poet-laureates of England, for let it not be imagined that the present laureate is the only dull poet who has sung the glory of British royalty in the three hundred years of the laureateship. Ben Jonson was the first to wear the official bays and be entitled to one hundred pounds a year and a pipe of Canary wine, and Alfred Austin is the last, while in between stretches a long line of names the most of which are forgotten. Tennyson, Wordsworth, Southey, and Dryden, of course, will never be forgotten, but there are not many of us that readily recall such dwellers on Parnassus as Thomas Shadwell, Nahum Tate, Nicholas Rowe, Colley Cibber, Laurence Eusden, and Henry James Pye.

The laureateship was taken from Dryden and

bestowed upon Shadwell, while Colley Cibber was appointed over Pope, just as Alfred Austin was appointed, when there were such poets in England as Algernon Charles Swinburne and William Watson.

Colley Cibber received the appointment from George II. in 1730, and was punctured with many an epigram. The following will serve as a specimen:

Well, said Apollo, still 'tis mine
To give the real laurel;
For that, my Pope, my son divine,
Of rival ends the quarrel.

But guessing who should have the luck
To be the birthday fibber,
I thought of Dennis, Tibbald, Duck,
But never dreamed of Cibber.

Cibber was made of metal that could not be penetrated by such shafts.

As may be remembered, Pope made him the hero of the Dunciad when he revised that poem. Louis Theobald was the hero in the poem as first written.

Cibber, however, was a very remarkable man.

Actor, playwright, manager, hero of the Dunciad and poet-laureate, but not a poet, Colley Cibber was one of the most noted, as he will always re-

main one of the most amusing figures in English literary history. He lived a long life, from the time of Charles II. until the closing years of the second George, which embraced the golden age of English literature. He intimately knew Dryden and Pope, Addison and Steele, Swift and Dr. Johnson. His writings, with the exception of one book, are almost forgotten, but that one book, his autobiography, entitled, "An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian," is liable to last as long as the language. It is one of the most amusing books ever written. He was neither a wise man nor a good man; he derided gravity, confessed his follies with the frankness of a Rousseau, and was vain even of his vanity. At eighteen he became an actor, and until extreme old age he loved the glare of footlights and "the collision of applauding hands." His book is filled with the gossip of the stage and with sketches of the most eminent actors and actresses of his time. All we know of Betterton, who is reputed the greatest Hamlet that ever lived, of Barton Booth, of the ever charming Mrs. Bracegirdle, with whom half of London was in love, and of many others whose names are still famous in the traditions of the stage, we gain through Cibber. His book has always ranked among the

favorites and has been praised by persons of as opposite temperament and disposition as Dr. Johnson and Horace Walpole.

Cibber's "Apology," although not so well written, ranks with Boswell's "Life of Johnson" as an English classic. No one can read these books without feeling that there is a striking similarity in character and disposition between Cibber and Boswell. They were both as vain of their weaknesses and follies as other men are of wisdom and the sense of decorum. Both fluttered through life like butterflies, and in most respects life was to both a long summer's day of trivialities and delight. Their good spirits were ample enough to carry them through every defeat, and sustain them against every buffet of fortune. Their vanities and frivolities were laughed at in a good-natured way, and that was all. Both sought literary distinction, and achieved it, and both were favorite associates with the most distinguished literary men of their times. Johnson once said of Boswell that he had missed his only chance for fame by not living when "the Dunciad" was written. Cibber did live when "the Dunciad" was written, and is the hero of it, Pope representing him as the darling of the Goddess of Dulness. It was a piece of spleen on Pope's part, for what-

ever else Cibber might have been, he was not a dunce, and never, under any circumstances, dull. His light and airy spirits never admitted of the least approach to stupidity.

As a playwright Cibber rearranged and altered Shakespeare's "Richard III.," and his version was long accepted by the great actors.

If by any chance one, after hearing the play, should wish to look up the lines,

> The aspiring youth that fired the Ephesian dome
> Outlives in fame the pious fool that raised it,

or that other climax of passion,

> Off with his head! So much for Buckingham!

and should turn to his Shakespeare for the purpose of finding them, he would be much deceived in the result of his search. In fact, the whole play would be more or less of a puzzle to him, and it would only be after some study and research that he would discover that "Richard III.," as it has been acted for nearly two hundred years, is Colley Cibber's alteration and not Shakespeare's tragedy. Edwin Booth, Henry Irving, and Richard Mansfield produced the original play, but it has never seemed to gain the hold on the public that Cibber's curious piece of amalgam did. All the

great actors, from Betterton to the elder Booth, preferred this latter.

Cibber continued to be the King's laureate until his death in 1757, writing an annual birthday ode in honor of that English king who could not speak a syllable of his people's language, and certainly could not construe a line of Cibber's odes. Curious readers will find these effusions in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Annual Register* during the period. More absolute doggerel was never written.

# DANIEL DEFOE,

## FATHER OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL.

(1660?–1731.)

"Robinson Crusoe" was properly the first English novel and Daniel Defoe the pioneer in that sort of writing, pointing the way for Richardson, Fielding, Goldsmith, Scott, Bulwer, Dickens, Thackeray and all the host of lesser novelists. It undoubtedly is a peculiar sort of novel, for it is without lovers or love-making, has no heroine and contains neither sentiment nor philosophy. There are critics who suppose that Defoe had in his mind a problem of life to be illustrated by his story, of a man stripped of everything and placed in an uninhabited island to begin all over again and by his own resources build himself up, thus showing the power of man over nature.

Defoe was sixty years of age when he wrote this story and it may be that his hero's specula-

tions on life, religion and Providence were such as had occurred to him during his stormy and troubled career, but that he wrote the tale for the purpose of giving those reflections and opinions to the world is not likely. His chief object was to tell an interesting story that had been suggested to his imagination by the adventures of Alexander Selkirk, which had been published some few years before, and the speculations naturally followed. Defoe's purpose was to entertain and not to instruct. How well he succeeded is proved by the testimony of every generation of readers, young and old, since the book was published. It ranks among the foremost of English classics and is read by everybody. It has been translated into all languages, and Burckhart, the traveler, heard it read aloud in Arabic around the camp fires of the caravans of the desert.

Little can be said of this immortal story that has not already been said many times. It is so real and enters so minutely into every particular of the hero's adventures that it is like truth itself, and it casts all modern realistic writing far in the shade. Not even in books of history and biography, that purport to give actual facts, is there such a sense of the real as in this masterpiece of Defoe's.

But while everyone knows all about Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, there are not many that know much about Defoe himself, and it is only in recent years that his biography has been written. He belongs to one of the brilliant periods of English literary history—the age of Queen Anne. He was contemporary with Atterbury and Pope, Swift and Arbuthnot, Addison and Steele, Gay and Prior. He wrote an enormous number of books and pamphlets, and took an active part in the politics of the time. "Robinson Crusoe" appeared the year of Addison's death, but Defoe's name has never been associated with the "Wits of Queen Anne."

Besides being the pioneer of modern novelists Defoe was the pioneer of modern journalists, and established his paper, the *Review*, in 1704, five years before the *Tatler* appeared, and conducted it until 1713, one year after the *Spectator* had ceased to exist. He wrote on all sorts of topics, social, religious and political, and next to Swift was considered the most trenchant political writer of the time, and yet while everything that Swift wrote had been preserved, none of Defoe's political writings had ever been republished.

He was one of the first of English social and political reformers, advocated the equality of the

sexes, prison reform, free trade and opposed dueling, and his pamphlets and other writings were always popular and influential. He was on confidential terms with cabinet ministers and with King William III., and was employed by Queen Anne on important missions, taking an active part in bringing about the union with Scotland; and yet neither Macaulay nor Lord Stanhope mentions him in his history. Hume calls him "a scurrilous party writer in very little reputation," while Swift and Pope never speak of him without a sneer.

He wrote several other novels besides "Robinson Crusoe," but they are too coarse for modern tastes, and no one now finds much enjoyment in "Colonel Jack," "Captain Singleton," "Moll Flanders" or "Roxana." One of the most famous of his shorter pieces is "The True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal," in which he relates with great detail the circumstances of the appearance of a ghost to certain persons in London. It was written with such an air of truth that the story was universally believed for years, but it was solely Defoe's invention.

He also wrote "A History of the Black Art," "The Secrets of the Invisible World," "A Universal History of Apparitions" and a humor-

ous "History of the Devil," and in all these he relied solely on his imagination for his facts.

One reason that is assigned for the oblivion into which his writings have fallen is that in politics he acted a double part, and was in the pay of one side to betray the secrets of the other. So great was his power of circumstantial inventions, and so remarkable his genius for lying like truth, that for ten years he made the Whigs believe he was a Whig and the Tories believe he was a Tory. In his *Review* he advocated Whig principles, while he was in the secret pay of the Tory government. Swift must have known this, and despised Defoe accordingly, though Swift himself "ratted" and left the Whigs to become a tower of strength to the Tory government. Defoe's political conduct has found defenders, but we are no longer interested in it. What we are interested in is the fact that he was one of the most remarkable writers in the Augustan age of English literature.

# RICHARDSON

## AND HIS NOVELS.

(1689–1761.)

SAMUEL RICHARDSON has sometimes been called the father of the modern English novel, but this statement is too broad. Defoe has a much better claim to that title. What may be conceded, however, to Richardson is that he was the inventor or originator of the English domestic novel, made up from the incidents of everyday life. His method also was original, his stories being told in the form of correspondence between the principal characters. How he hit upon this plan he himself has told. When he was a boy he was employed by several rather illiterate young women to write or correct their love letters for them. Late in life, when two booksellers entreated him to write for them a little volume of letters in a common style on such subjects as might be of use to country readers who were unable to write

for themselves, he suggested that it might be well also to instruct them how they should think and act in common cases as well as write. Out of this plan came Richardson's first novel of "Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded." He was fifty-one when it appeared.

Samuel Richardson was born in 1689 and was educated at a village grammar school—"the only university he ever attended." He was apprenticed to the printing craft, and after faithful service of some years he, like Benjamin Franklin, a few years later, set up a shop of his own. He was industrious and fond of writing and wrote prefaces and dedications for other men's books. He was an honest and pleasing gentleman, a little vain and fond of praise from a little coterie of female friends he gathered about him, to whom he read books, and later his own novels. But he was a good and benevolent man, and one thing we particularly like him for is that he frequently relieved the necessities of Samuel Johnson, then a struggling hack writer, who should have been wearing "a porter's knot," one publisher of the time declared. Johnson did not adopt the "porter's knot," but kept on at his work and finally grew to be the man we now know. The kindly aid of Richardson helped him, often to the extent

of one or two guineas, and once of six, to extricate him from the clutches of a bailiff who had him impounded for debt.

"Pamela" met with tremendous success. It was recommended from the pulpit, one preacher asserting that "if all other books were to be burned 'Pamela' and the Bible should be preserved." Alexander Pope declared that it would do more good than twenty sermons, and in the most fashionable circles it was customary for fine ladies to hold up the volumes to one another to show they had the book everyone was talking about.

Of course the wits of the time made a good deal of fun of it, and Henry Fielding satirized and parodied it in his story of "The Adventures of Joseph Andrews." Joseph is a footman and the supposed brother of Pamela, who by keeping the pattern of his sister's virtue in mind "preserves his purity" in the midst of temptation.

But in spite of the wits "Pamela" held its own. Boswell reports a conversation between Johnson and Erskine, in which the latter says: "Surely, sir, Richardson is tedious." To which Johnson replies: "Why, sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang your-

self. But you must read him for the sentiment and consider the story as only giving occasion for the sentiment."

At another time Johnson said of Richardson he "has enlarged the knowledge of human nature and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue."

Richardson's second novel was "Clarissa Harlowe," in eight volumes, and his third and last "Sir Charles Grandison," in seven volumes.

Do people read these ponderous tomes nowadays? Doubtless only the omnivorous and curious readers. Once they were read by everybody, both in Great Britain and on the Continent, and by our own colonial ancestors. But a hundred and fifty years makes a good deal of difference in tastes and fashions, and, besides, we have our own novels to read.

In his lectures on the humorists, Thackeray discourses on Smollett and Fielding, but not on Richardson, for the excellent reason that Richardson was not a humorist. Not a ray of humor illuminates those sentimental pages. Thackeray gives us a glimpse of Richardson in "The Virginians." It is where Harry Warrington runs to take a look at the great author, of whom he had heard his brother George so often speak.

The great author was accustomed to be adored. A gentler wind never puffed mortal vanity. Enraptured spinsters flung tea leaves round him and incensed him with the coffee pot. Matrons kissed the slippers they had worked for him. There was a halo of virtue round his nightcap. All Europe had thrilled, panted, admired, trembled, wept over the pages of the immortal, little, kind, honest man with the round paunch. Harry came back quite glowing and proud at having a bow from him. "Ah," says he, "my lord, I am glad to have seen him!"

Because we do not read Richardson is no reason why he is not a great author and has not written great books. His range is not wide, but in its scope it is Shakespearian for a knowledge of human nature. His anatomy of the springs of human action is minute, and if we will but grant his situations his art in bringing about the climax is perfect. His characters, too, are vital, and we can see them as they move slowly through all the minute detail of their lives. Pamela, Clarissa, Lovelace and Sir Charles are not puppets, but living human beings, and they are well worth study.

Taine in his "History of English Literature," praises Clarissa and Pamela, but is inclined to make fun of Sir Charles. He is entirely too proper for the Frenchman. Taine quotes some of Sir Charles' highflown sentences, and says:

It is too much; we are surfeited; we say to ourselves that these phrases should be accompanied by a mandolin. The most patient of mortals feels himself sick at heart when he has swallowed a thousand pages of this sentimental twaddle, and all the milk and water of love. * * * He is great, he is generous, delicate, pious, irreproachable; he has never done a mean action, nor made a wrong gesture. His conscience and his wig are unsullied. Amen! Let us canonize him and stuff him with straw.

# WORKS OF HENRY FIELDING.

(1707–1754.)

If one would know the secret of Thackeray's style, a style at once elegant, yet familiar, and luminous, yet discursive, a style that reminds one of the best conversation of a cultivated man of the world, he must go to the works of Henry Fielding. Not that Thackeray imitated Fielding, but by his study of that master he learned the matchless grace and ease of our English tongue.

Dickens, too, owed much to Fielding, and on more than one occasion acknowledged his indebtedness. In truth, while Fielding is not the first of English novelists, he is the greatest, and, like Shakespeare in the drama, leads all the rest. He is the master to whom all must turn who would learn the niceties of the art of fiction. Byron called him the "Prose Homer of human nature." In his lecture on "The English Humorists" Thackeray says:

I cannot hope to make a hero of Henry Fielding. Why hide his faults? Why conceal his weakness in clouds of

periphrases? . . . . Stained as you see him, and worn by care and dissipation, that man retains some of the most precious and splendid human qualities and endowments. He has an admirable love of truth, the keenest instinctive antipathy to hypocrisy, the happiest satirical gift of laughing it to scorn. His wit is wonderfully wise and detective; it flashes upon a rogue and lightens up a rascal like a policeman's lantern. He is one of the manliest and kindest of human beings.

Charles Lamb says that "the hearty laugh of Tom Jones clears the air," and Hazlitt remarks: "As a painter of real life he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature he was little inferior to Shakespeare." Sir Walter Scott wrote a biography of Fielding in which he praises him as the first of British novelists and immortal as a painter of natural manners. The most incisive of American critics, James Russell Lowell, places Fielding among the greatest of English writers, and such undoubtedly is the universal testimony of critics and readers.

Fielding's works, like many others belonging to past English literature, are of those that are more written about than read in these days. There is so much that is good in our everyday production that it is only omnivorous readers that can go back to read the English classics. Most people are willing to take these for granted,

though they want to know about them, and Fielding's novels are of this class. They need to be read by proxy. This wisest and wittiest of writers cannot be recommended for general perusal, not, as Mr. Lowell very acutely remarks, because the readers would be corrupted, but because they would be shocked. Fielding wrote in conformity with the spirit and manners of his time. He lived in a coarse age and described coarse manners, and his books are, therefore, not for the "Young Person," any more than are the works of Richardson or of Sterne. They belong to an age and describe a people who are as remote and strange to us in some respects as if they were of a different planet. Fielding's moral standard was not high, and he falls into grossness at times, but his volumes present a picture of life and manners as they really were. If we would know what kind of people our English ancestors were in the days of George II., we must resort to these pages. Thackeray says:

> Fielding has described the characters and scenes which he knew and saw. He had more than ordinary opportunities for becoming acquainted with life. His family and education first—his fortunes and misfortunes afterwards,—brought him into the society of every rank and condition of men.

Henry Fielding was born April 22, 1707, of a very ancient family, his father being a general in the British army. He was educated at Eton, and at twenty was thrown upon his own resources for a livelihood. Nominally he had an allowance from his father, which, in his own phrase, "any man might pay who would." He went to London and lived a life of fashion, gayety, and dissipation on nothing a year, but if he had possessed millions his improvidence would have been the same. His cousin, Lady Mary Montagu, said of him: "He would have wanted money if his hereditary lands had been as extensive as his imagination." He wrote plays which were not very successful, and toward middle life married, studied law, became a barrister, and was appointed a justice of the peace, in which office he became a terror to evil-doers.

The greatest and most famous of Fielding's works is "Tom Jones," a comic prose epic and work of art which in the domain of fiction has never been equaled, at least not in English literature. It is written in the most admirable style, and, as George Eliot says, "the author seems to bring his arm-chair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English." Here we may find wit, humor, learning, generosity, tenderness,

hatred of oppression, pity for the weak, scorn of affectation and ridicule of folly. Its scenes are life itself, its characters as varied as mankind, its stage is the world. It can no more be recommended for family reading than Shakespeare's comedies, for it belongs to a bygone age. The hero is not an admirable young man, much as he was praised when he first made his appearance. Thackeray says:

> As a picture of manners the novel of "Tom Jones" is indeed exquisite; as a work of construction, quite a wonder; the byplay of wisdom, the power of observation, the multiplied felicitous turns and thoughts, the varied character of the great comic epic keep the reader in a perpetual admiration and curiosity. But against Mr. Thomas Jones himself we have a right to put in a protest and quarrel with the esteem the author evidently has for that character.

Nevertheless, when all has been said that can be said on the score of grossness, Fielding continues to rank with the great portrayers of character and living humanity—with Homer, Cervantes and Shakespeare. His works may not again be generally read, nor is it necessary they should be, but they must form a part of every well-selected library, for they belong to undying English literature.

# LAURENCE STERNE.

(1713–1768.)

LAURENCE STERNE personally was not an admirable man, and no quantity of whitewash can make him appear so, though he has had defenders. He was a clergyman who preached most excellent sermons with the Christianity left out, a pagan philosopher in the robes of the Church of England. He was a theoretical, if not a practical, libertine, who wished his wife was dead that he might marry another woman, whose husband he also wished was dead. His mind, like Swift's, was crowded with coarse and indelicate images, that found their way into his writings. He had neither morality nor conscience, lived principally for himself, and, as Byron said, preferred "whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother," though this latter accusation has not been proved. Yet it is plausible, for he was that kind of man. He was all tears and sentimentality over the creatures of his imagination, but had none to spare for the real troubles and sufferings of humanity around him.

His father was a poor ensign in the British army, who died when Laurence was still young. This was perhaps lucky for the youth, as he was taken and educated by a wealthy relative. He was for a number of years at Cambridge University, and, as was too much the custom in those days with young men who had no family influence to help them forward in life, entered the Church as an easy way of making a livelihood. He had plenty of learning, and a wide knowledge of books, but was little qualified either by tastes or habits for the sacred calling. It was also a very unfortunate step for him, for while his living was, indeed, assured, his future fame was to be forever tarnished. Had he remained plain Laurence Sterne instead of becoming Rev. Laurence Sterne, Thackeray would never have expressed the bitter contempt for him that he has, and the world would have forgiven him much.

The first volumes of "Tristram Shandy," Sterne's famous novel, appeared in 1759, when the author was in his forty-seventh year. Their Rabelaisian humor was a revelation to that generation and Sterne became famous. He was invited to London and was soon the pet of London society. Concerning this Dr. Johnson remarked: "Any man who has a name, or who has the

power of pleasing, will be very generally invited in London. The man Sterne, I have been told, has had engagements for three months." Most certainly the delightful Yorick was a much sought-after man in his days of London sunshine, and fashionable society subscribed for his sermons and read his book. The poet Gray wrote to his friend Mason:

> "Tristram Shandy" is still a greater object of admiration, the man as well as the book; one is invited to dinner, when he dines, a fortnight before.

By and by the shadows fell, ill health came and Sterne was forced to give up those gayeties he so much loved and longed for. He went back to the country, but the fascinations of the great city were too strong for him, and the next year he returned with his "Sentimental Journey" to place in the hands of the booksellers. Thackeray describes the end:

> Eager as ever for praise and pleasure—as vain, as wicked, as witty, as false as he had ever been—death at length seized the feeble wretch, and on the 18th of March, 1768, that "bale of cadaverous goods," as he calls his body, was consigned to Pluto.

He died in hired lodgings and his attendants robbed him of his gold sleeve buttons while he

was expiring. He is interred in St. George's burial ground, where his tomb may yet be seen.

Thackeray's unsparing judgment on Sterne is much too harsh, for he was neither a voluptuary nor a libertine, save in imagination. He wrote love letters to married women and to others who encouraged him, and his principles were lax, but he was not dissolute; certainly not in his later life, the period that Thackeray describes.

He possessed an effeminate and sentimental nature, a whimsical humor that saw incongruity in everything; a mind that magnified the smallest specks and made mountains out of molehills. His works are full of all kinds of quirks and turns, of strange comparisons and images, of tangled threads without ends, and of curious learning, much of which he transplanted from the works of others without credit. Everything is jumbled up together, and yet, while it takes four volumes of "Tristram" to fully tell the story of the hero's birth, there is much entertainment by the way. One thing is certain, whatever may be the real character of Sterne, he was not a hypocrite. He did not pretend to be something he was not or to be better than he was. He is the Yorick of his novel and of his "Journey," and he fairly well portrays himself. He could weep at the sight

of a captive starling, or an overburdened donkey, or a forsaken lamb. Here is a specimen:

Dear sensibility, source inexhausted of all that is precious in our joys or costly in our sorrows! Thou givest a portion of it sometimes to the roughest peasant who traverses the bleakest mountains. He finds a lacerated lamb of another's flock. This moment I behold him, leaning with his head against his crook, with piteous inclination, looking down upon it! "Oh, had I come one moment sooner!"

And again he writes "God tempers the wind to the shorne lamb," a phrase that many excellent people think they can find in the Bible.

"Tristram Shandy," Sterne's masterpiece, however, is not a novel without a hero, as Thackeray calls "Vanity Fair," but it is a novel without a story. There is a kind of plot in the book, which the author uses in accordance with the theory of Bayes in "The Rehearsal," who asks: "What is a plot good for but to bring in fine things?" The book is a storehouse of curiosities, erudition and scholastic learning, wherein one finds shreds and patches of all kinds and colors. In one place there is a theological dissertation, in which there is given the famous curse of excommunication used by the mediæval church, concerning which Uncle Toby said: "Our army swore terribly in Flanders, but nothing to this." In

another chapter there is a display of medical lore, with quotations from unknown authors. There is much discussion about noses, many absurd stories and histories and occasional side addresses to the reader. The author is like a butterfly dancing hither and thither in sunshine and shade, sometimes alighting on an exquisite flower, sometimes touching objects that are noisome. He is blown about by every wind of fancy, has no set purpose save to arouse curiosity, excite emotion and make the reader laugh or cry. He has no control over his pen, and while he appears to be intent upon one topic, the merest suggestion sets him off on another. He rambles afield like poor Tom, led by incoherent fancies over numberless zigzag routes that carry him nowhere.

Everyone knows the characters in this strange book, even those who have not read it. They form a part of English literature. The creations of Shakespeare are not more familiar than are Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim, Walter Shandy and Dr. Slop, the widow Wadman and Susanna. They are immortal, and justify Sterne's title to greatness as an author. It might well be wished that the book were free from its grossness and coarseness, but in considering this it must be remembered that it was written in a coarse and

indelicate age, when men were the chief readers of books and the Young Person as a novel reader was unknown.

The indecency of the earlier portions of the book cannot be defended, though Sterne himself made some sort of excuse for it. He once asked a lady if she had read "Tristram." She replied: "I have not, Mr. Sterne, and, to be plain with you, I am informed it is not proper for female perusal."

"My dear, good lady, do not be gulled by such stories; the book is like your young heir there [pointing to a child of three years old who was rolling on the carpet in white tunics], he shows at times a good deal that is usually concealed, but it is all in perfect innocence." Sir Walter Scott tells this story in his criticism on Sterne, but is not at all impressed by it as a defense. Some of Sterne's allusions are very much more than a mere breach of decorum. But Scott says of him:

> The style employed by Sterne is fancifully ornamented, but at the same time vigorous and masculine, and full of that animation and force which can only be derived by an acquaintance with the early English prose writers. In the power of approaching and touching the finer feelings of the heart he has never been excelled, if, indeed, he has ever been equaled, and may be at once recorded as one of the

most affected and one of the most simple of writers—as one of the greatest plagiarists and one of the most original geniuses whom England has produced.

In his essay on "Wit and Humor" Leigh Hunt thus speaks of Sterne's book:

If I were requested to name the book of all others which combined wit and humor under the highest appearance of levity with the profoundest wisdom, it would be "Tristram Shandy."

The principal characters have been universally admired, and Hazlitt says that "My Uncle Toby is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature."

The story of Le Fevre has also been called the most exquisite in the English language, and it is assuredly a tale of infinite pathos and beauty.

Corporal Trim discovers Le Fevre, broken down by illness and reports the case to Uncle Toby. "And did you offer him my purse and my house?" Uncle Toby inquires in effect of the corporal.

"Your honor knows," said the corporal, "I had no orders." "'True," quoth my Uncle Toby, "thou didst very right, Trim, as a soldier —but certainly very wrong as a man."

Uncle Toby decides that the sick lieutenant must be cured and set on his legs again.

"In a fortnight or three weeks," added my Uncle Toby, smiling, "he might march." "He will never march, an' please your honor, in this world," said the corporal. "He will march," said my Uncle Toby, rising up from the side of the bed, with one shoe off. "An' please, your honor," said the corporal, "he will never march, but to his grave." "He shall march," cried my Uncle Toby, marching the foot which had a shoe on, though without advancing an inch; "he shall march to his regiment." "He cannot stand it," said the corporal. "He shall be supported," said my Uncle Toby. "He'll drop at last," said the corporal, "and what will become of his boy?" "He shall not drop," said my Uncle Toby, firmly. "A-well-o'day—do what we can for him," said Trim, maintaining his point, "the poor soul will die." "He shall not die, by G——!" cried my Uncle Toby. The accusing spirit which flew up to heaven's chancery with the oath blushed as he gave it in—and the recording angel, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out forever.

"To my mind," writes Charles Leslie in his autobiography. "Uncle Toby is the most perfect specimen of a Christian gentleman that ever existed."

Sterne's other work, "The Sentimental Journey," is open to the same objections that modern readers present to Tristram, but it is not nearly so bewildering in its progress. It contains much, however, that will always be admired and which will perish only with our literature.

# TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

(1721–1771.)

Tobias George Smollett was one of the five great novelists of the eighteenth century, the others being Defoe, Richardson, Fielding and Sterne. In literary quality he does not quite rank with Fielding and Sterne, nor has he the originality of Defoe and Richardson, but as a humorist, as a portrayer of life and manners and as a story-teller he is the equal of them all. He was the forerunner of Dickens, though far from possessing the genius of Dickens, but their humor was of the same broad and comic kind. The modern master has not the grossness of the elder, for he lived in a more decent and circumspect age, but each saw the comic side of the life and manners about him, and described it as he saw it. And it is this quality that makes fiction enduring, and is the reason why Smollett's novels still live. We who live in a decorous age naturally deplore their coarseness and laxity of speech and action. There are passages in them that are not proper for the

eyes and ears of young people in this day, simply because the young people of the twentieth century have a very different training from that which their great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers had. A hundred years ago people conversed with a plainness of speech upon topics that would hardly be tolerated in a club-room, much less in mixed companies in these days. Fashions have changed, that is all.

But if the test of an enduring literature is to be its fitness for the perusal of young ladies, then the bonfire of books would exceed that of the Alexandrian library burned by Omar, when books enough were found to heat the baths of the city for six months. Smollett painted the manners of his time, and his works have the merit of history as well as of fiction. He was a kindly, manly, honest and quick-tempered Scot, who usually had some sort of a quarrel on hand, fighting an uphill battle with fortune all his life. Such was the lot of literary men in his day, a life of slavery at niggard pay, with the bailiff ever on the watch to clap them into jail at the suit of some creditor. Johnson went through it, Goldsmith and Fielding went through it. Richardson was luckier, for he was a printer and stuck to his shop and his shop stuck to him.

## TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

Tobias George Smollett was born in 1721 of a good family, his grandfather being Sir James Smollett, with a considerable estate. The father of Tobias was Archibald, who gave offense to Sir James by marrying a portionless wife for love, and he was cut off without a penny. He died shortly after the birth of Tobias, and his troubles ended, while his son's began. The grandfather, however, made some small provision for his widowed daughter-in-law and her family of three children, and Tobias received something of an education. He was then apprenticed to a medical practitioner, where he acquired some medical knowledge. He also scribbled poetry and wrote a tragedy, and at the age of eighteen went up to London to seek his fortune, as many a Scotch youth was in the habit of doing in those days. "Roderick Random," his first novel, is more or less autobiographical in respect to his adventures in those early days.

He found but little encouragement for his tragedy, however, and he then sought employment as a surgeon's mate in one of the war vessels of a fleet that was going out to attack Carthagena in the war then pending with Spain. The condition of the British navy was at its lowest ebb. Brutality, cruelty and incompetency

ruled supreme, and Smollett, both in "Roderick Random" and in his history of the expedition, has described the dreadful scenes that occurred on that ill-fated expedition. When in the West Indies Smollett retired from the naval service and set up for a doctor in Jamaica, but his stay in that island was short. He married there and returned to England with his wife, who had a small estate. He now began his literary labors in earnest, and his first novel, "Roderick Random," was published in 1748. From this time forward he worked with the utmost industry at all kinds of literary work. He set up the *Critical Review*, and was book reviewer, critic, pamphleteer, poet, novelist and historian. He wrote a continuation of Hume's history, bringing that work down from 1688 to 1762, and he did it very creditably, although his researches were not wide. He wrote "Peregrine Pickle," "Count Fathom," translated "Don Quixote," also the works of Voltaire, traveled in France and Italy and published his "Travels," wrote "The Adventures of an Atom," went to reside in Italy, where he wrote his last novel "Humphry Clinker," and in 1771 died in his fifty-first year. He had fought a good fight with the utmost courage and spirit, in spite of illness, advancing years and narrow fortune. His

novels are mainly based on his own recollections, for he did not possess an inventive imagination, but he has created a number of characters that will live as long as novels are read.

A generation that reads the later novels and tales of Thomas Hardy have no great quarrel to make with the novels of Tobias Smollett. The modern writer may be more polished in his style and more artistic in the evolution of his plot, but he does not tell any better or cleaner story. Smollett wrote six novels, two plays—a tragedy and a comedy—a number of poems, and performed a vast amount of mere hackwork. Of all this literary baggage, three only of the novels are worthy of remembrance.

His first and most generally read novel is "Roderick Random," a story avowedly founded on the model of "Gil Blas." Like that famous story, it is a novel of adventure, a succession of incidents in the career of the hero from his childhood until he has succeeded in establishing himself in life. Roderick is not a very admirable youth, but he typifies his age, the brutal and coarse-fibered eighteenth century. From beginning to end the tale is as realistic as a newspaper report. It is a picture of manners and character common to the time, and which may be seen in

the cartoons and caricatures of Hogarth, in the letters of Walpole and Lady Mary Montagu, and in the *Annual Register*. London was not all paved streets in those days, and one had to go through a good deal of muck and mire to reach the king's palace, and in like manner the vast majority of the people were sensual and selfish, and this is precisely the way Smollett has portrayed them. Roderick's moral standards were not high, but he was the product of that time. The adventures he meets with are substantially the same that Smollett himself met with or knew of in others, somewhat heightened by color and circumstance. So the characters of Lieutenant Bowling, Strap and Dr. Morgan are drawn to the life and full of vitality. "I think," says Thackeray, "that Uncle Bowling in 'Roderick Random' is as good a character as Squire Western himself, and Mr. Morgan, the Welsh apothecary, is as pleasant as Dr. Caius."

Smollett's second novel, "Peregrine Pickle," is of a higher literary quality than the first, though it runs on the same lines of personal adventure. It is also more artistic, the characters are better contrasted and are of more variety. It abounds in the most genuine comedy, often becoming farce, and teems with humorous situations.

Smollett has never been excelled, not even by Cooper and Marryat, in the portrayal of old "sea dogs," and in this novel there are three that are unrivaled in all fiction—Commodore Trunnion, Lieutenant Hatchway and Tom Pipes the bo'sun. They become the center of no end of comical situations, from the marriage of the commodore with Mrs. Grizzle to the hunting scene where the horses run away with the sailors. One thing is certain, the interest in the story never flags and though, as has often been said, it is not for all tastes, men like Edmund Burke were greatly delighted with it. Burke thought Tom Pipes the bo'sun one of the most humorous characters ever invented. The description of the old commodore's death is one of the finest things in the volume and full of pathos. He gave minute directions as to the disposition of his "old hulk" after he had "slipped his cable" and dictated the following epitaph:

Here lies, foundered in a fathom and a half, the shell of Hawser Trunnion, Esq., formerly commander of a squadron in his majesty's service, who broached to at 5 p. m. Oct. x., in the year of his age three score and nineteen. He kept his guns always loaded and his tackle ready manned, and never showed his poop to the enemy, except when he took her in tow; but his shot being expended, his match burnt out and his upper works decayed, he was sunk by Death's

superior weight of metal. Nevertheless he will be weighed again at the great day, his rigging refitted and his timbers repaired, and with one broadside make his adversary strike in his turn.

This is almost as good as Dr. Franklin's celebrated epitaph.

Smollett next wrote "Count Fathom"—a terrible picture of crime and human depravity—"Sir Launcelot Greaves" and "The History of an Atom," but no time need be lost on them.

His last and greatest novel is "The Expedition of Humphry Clinker," of which Thackeray said: "It is, I do believe, the most laughable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel writing began." It will be remembered that in "Vanity Fair" Becky Sharp, when acting as governess at Sir Pitt Crawley's, ingratiates herself with her pupils by introducing them to the history of "Humphry Clinker."

The story is told in a series of letters written by Matthew Bramble and the members of his family, describing the scenes and adventures through which they pass during a tour they make through Bath and London to Scotland. Here we have Matthew Bramble, the eccentric but kindly old bachelor, traveling for the benefit of his health; Tabitha Bramble, his sister and

housekeeper, Jerry Melford, his nephew, and Lydia Melford, his niece, and the never-to-be-forgotten Winifred Jenkins, Tabitha's maid servant. Humphry Clinker is the footman and Lieutenant Lishmahago, a Scotch lieutenant, is the acknowledged prototype of Scott's Dugald Dalgetty. These characters are immortal in the pantheon of fiction. It is a very noble gallery. The story partakes of some of the objectionable features that are inseparable from all of Smollett's novels, but it is a masterpiece of comedy and broad farce. It was a great favorite with Macaulay.

Smollett's poetry is no longer remembered, but there is one passage in his "Ode of Independence" that contains the true poetic fire:

> Thy spirit, Independence, let me share.
> Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye;
> Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
> Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky.

# SAMUEL JOHNSON.

## (1709–1784.)

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield in 1709, was educated as a sizar at Pembroke College, Oxford, taught school for a time and failed, married for love a woman many years his senior and in his twenty-eighth year went up to London with a tragedy in his pocket to pursue the literary calling. Never was there a more inopportune moment for such a pursuit. The period has been well described, as "a dark night between two sunny days." The patronage of the great, such as supported Addison and Congreve and Swift and Steele had disappeared. The patronage of the public had not commenced. Sales of histories, of poems, of essays and of periodicals were extremely limited, and booksellers could not afford to pay much for the most industrious literary labor. All that a writer could do, though his whole time were employed, was to provide for the passing day, nor could he always do this. There

were no men of letters of more distinguished genius in the eighteenth century than Samuel Johnson, James Thomson, Henry Fielding and William Collins, yet each one of them at some period in his life suffered imprisonment for debt.

For twenty-five years Johnson pursued this calling and remained a literary hack, writing poems, essays, articles of every sort, and finally the dictionary that brought him fame and but little money. Then George III. ascended the throne and a pension of three hundred pounds was bestowed upon the great lexicographer. At last his years of toil were rewarded and he emerged from the garrets and low eating houses in which his life had been passed to associate on equal terms with the refined and the cultivated, who regarded him as the dictator of literature and esteemed him a classic. Goldsmith and Gibbon, Burke and Reynolds became his familiar friends and took delight in his society and conversation.

Thanks to Boswell, Mrs. Thrale, Fanny Burney, Miss Seward and Miss Reynolds, not to mention several less prominent writers, we know Dr. Johnson as we do few of the great writers of the past. Others we picture to ourselves in the light of their works; with his personality and conversation we are as familiar as with acquaint-

ances of daily intercourse. Indeed we are nearer to him than we are to many of our most intimate friends, and certainly we understand him better than he was understood by his own contemporaries. We are aware of his poverty, his indolence, his violent temper, his uncouthness, his gigantic strength, his spirit of contradiction, his strong prejudices, his superstition, his robust morality, his sincere piety, his tenderness, his benevolence, his independence, his manliness and his rare combination of intellectual acuteness and intellectual weight. He possessed the clearest head and the largest store of common sense, where his prejudices were not involved, of any Englishman of his time. No man was fonder of the truth and of intellectual honesty than he, and yet so great was his passion for conversational victory that when he had once espoused a side, either by accident or perversity, he would maintain it without much regard for fairness or the rules of decorum. "There is no arguing with Dr. Johnson," said Goldsmith once, "for if his pistol misses fire he will knock you down with the butt end of it." So overbearing was he at times in his manner toward an opponent that Goldsmith said to him: "Sir, you are for making a monarchy out of what should be a republic."

These are paradoxes in his character that simply show how human he was, and despite which he remains to us one of the most interesting and impressive figures in literary history. When Boswell was writing his book, he was appealed to not to describe the more disagreeable traits of the doctor's character, but he refused. "I will not make my tiger a cat to please anybody," he said. And so we have a portraiture as truthful as the highest genius for biography can make it. That Johnson stood this tremendous ordeal proves his greatness.

Froude endeavored to portray Carlyle as Boswell has portrayed Dr. Johnson, and we all know what a lamentable failure he made of it. He exposed Carlyle's weaknesses and follies, but only demonstrated that Carlyle was a selfish and thoughtless egotist, miserable if he heard the cock crow in the morning, or raging if his neighbor's piano made music through the partition wall. Froude's revelations degraded his hero. Boswell's exalted his. If Froude had not written we would have known Carlyle in his works only, and he would have ever remained to us the apostle of truth, manhood and heroism. If Boswell had not written we would have known Johnson not at all, not even through his works.

The contemporaries of Johnson thought "The Rambler" was an immortal work that would carry the doctor's name to remotest posterity. It now inhabits the dustiest shelves of our libraries and is seldom or never disturbed. Had Dr. Johnson's fame rested upon his works alone he would long since have been forgotten by the general reader. Happily for him, he conversed better than he wrote, and it is his conversation, as recorded by Boswell and other contemporaries, that has perpetuated his fame.

The best of Johnson's writings is "The Lives of the Poets," a work that has well stood the test of time and may be read to-day with instruction and profit. The subject was proposed to him by certain associated booksellers who were publishing a selection from the British poets and desired to have biographical sketches of each poet. The selections commenced with Cowley, so that the work does not reach back to the Elizabethans, but it is nevertheless very fine. In his sketches Johnson did better than he promised, for he not only gave as accurate biographies as he could compile, but he wrote criticisms which, with but few exceptions, have been accepted by the literary world. His judgments are supported by strong arguments, and are, as a rule, shrewd

and vigorous; and even when he falls into error, as he notably does in his criticism of Milton, he is not easily answered.

His criticisms of Pope and Dryden are among the classics in that kind of writing and have been universally approved. Professor Wilson, writing of Johnson in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1829, said:

> We have no truly great critical intellect since his time . . . . . He had his prejudices and his partialities, and his bigotries, and his blindnesses, but on the same fruit tree you see shriveled pears or apples on the same branch with jargonelles or gold pippins worthy of Paradise. . . . . Show me the critique that beats his on Pope and on Dryden—nay even on Milton; and hang me if you may not read his essay on Shakespeare, even after having read Charles Lamb or heard Coleridge, with increased admiration of the powers of all three.

Johnson was not a Rhadamanthine judge, and it is something amusing to note what patience he has with the mediocrity of such now forgotten poets as Blackmore and Sprat. If he can say nothing in praise of their poetry, he at least extols them for the excellence of their morality, or for their piety and good intentions.

One book of Johnson's is still read, as constant new editions of it prove. "Rasselas, Prince of

Abyssinia," maintains its place in libraries for the young, though it was not especially intended for young people.

The circumstances under which it was written, to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral, have always tended to give an added interest to the little book.

Johnson's principal poems are "London," written shortly after his arrival in London in 1738, and "The Vanity of Human Wishes," written ten years later. These poems were greatly admired in their day, the latter more particularly, which is on Johnson's favorite theme—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Everywhere, from "China to Peru," in every pursuit and among all classes of people, we see the same thing—defeated aspirations, disappointed ambitions and blasted hopes. Even the retired scholar does not escape the general destiny, and should not hope for any other fate.

> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
> And pause awhile from letters to be wise;
> Then mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail;
> See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
> To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
> If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
> Hear Lydiat's life and Galileo's end.

Johnson originally wrote the fourth of the above lines:

> Toil, envy, want, the garret and the jail.

All of which he had experienced in his struggle upward. After his experience with Lord Chesterfield, who was supposed to be the patron of the dictionary, but so bitterly disappointed Johnson in that respect, he subscribed the word "patron" for "garret:"

> Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail.

Many lines of this poem are among the familiar quotations of every day.

> From Marlborough's eyes the tears of dotage flow,
> And Swift expires a driveler and a show.

> Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage.

> He left a name at which the world grew pale,
> To point a moral or adorn a tale.

Lockhart tells us that the last line of manuscript that Scott sent to the press was a quotation from "The Vanity of Human Wishes."

Johnson's tragedy, "Irene," was brought out by Garrick, and it was acted for nine nights, but it was never again produced. It is a monotonous declamation in five acts, and the most unreadable of human compositions.

When Johnson was making his arrangements to begin writing his dictionary of the English language, the Earl of Chesterfield, then one of the secretaries of state, expressed great interest in the undertaking. He had dabbled somewhat in letters and was ambitious of literary distinction. Under these circumstances Johnson addressed the prospectus or plan of the dictionary to Lord Chesterfield in terms very flattering to that nobleman. Speaking of deciding upon questions of purity or propriety in language, Johnson says:

> And I may hope, my lord, that since you, whose authority in our language is so generally acknowledged, have commissioned me to declare my own opinion, I shall be considered as exercising a kind of vicarious jurisdiction; and that the power which might have been denied to my own claim will be readily allowed me as the delegate of your lordship.

Thus the great undertaking began with a sort of tacit understanding that Chesterfield was the patron and would do what lay in his power to promote the enterprise, and he did present Johnson with the sum of ten pounds, probably at the time the prospectus was addressed to him.

But that was all. For seven weary years, amid sickness and affliction, and sometimes of actual want, Johnson pursued his task. During the first of these years he called upon the earl numer-

ous times, but was either not admitted to his presence or was received with coldness and neglect, until at last Johnson refused to call any more, and resolved that he would have no further connection with him. The years passed; he wrote "The Rambler" and other papers, toiling all the while like a galley slave at the dictionary, having only six assistants to help him. His wife died, and he mourned her loss profoundly, but he labored on, and at last the end of the dictionary came in view.

Just on the eve of the publication Chesterfield, in the hope that the dictionary would he dedicated to him, attempted in a courtly manner to insinuate himself in the favor of Johnson. He wrote two very commendatory articles for *The World* in recommendation of the work and in praise of Johnson's superior qualifications for the task he had undertaken, and proposed that Mr. Johnson be declared "dictator of the language," whose word should be law on every disputed question. But Johnson was not to be fooled by any such courtly flattery. Years afterward he related the circumstances to Boswell as follows: "Sir, after making great professions, he had, for many years, taken no notice of me; but when my dictionary was coming out he fell a scribbling in *The*

*World* about it. Upon which I wrote him a letter, expressed in civil terms, but such as might show him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him.

Carlyle calls this celebrated letter "the far-famed blast of doom, proclaiming to a listening world that patronage should be no more." It is one of the great letters in the English language and it shows Johnson's sturdy spirit of independence even better than when he knocked down a bookseller with a folio volume because the bookseller had insulted him.

The letter opens with a reference to Chesterfield's articles in *The World* and then goes back to a time long prior when Johnson had waited upon his lordship, but had found his attendance so little encouraged that neither pride nor modesty would suffer him to continue it. He then says:

> Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.
>
> Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern upon a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has

reached ground encumbers him with help? The notice you have been pleased to take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary and cannot impart it; till I am known and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

The letter concludes with the statement that as he is under no obligations to any "favorer of learning" thus far, he will continue so to the end.

Then, having dispatched this letter to the noble lord, Johnson took down his poem "The Vanity of Human Wishes" and amended the line above referred to, cutting out the word "garret" and substituting the word "patron" as one of the "ills the scholar's life assail."

Johnson afterward expressed himself with pointed freedom concerning Chesterfield. "This man," said he, "I thought had been a lord among wits; but I find he is only a wit among lords."

# OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

(1728–1774.)

Of all English writers Oliver Goldsmith is the best beloved. That reckless, thriftless, blundering, smiling, loving Irishman has won his way into the hearts of men, as no other author that I know of has ever done. The impression he made upon his contemporaries he has made upon posterity, and wherever his name is known it is the synonym of purity, goodness, kindliness, humor, and human sympathy. As Thackeray says:

> You come hot and tired from the day's battle, and this sweet minstrel sings to you. Who could harm the kind vagrant harper? Whom did he ever hurt? He carries no weapon save the harp on which he plays to you, and with which he delights great and humble, young and old, the captains in the tent, or the soldiers around the fire, or the women and children in the villages at whose porches he stops and sings his simple songs of love and beauty.

Sir Walter Scott said of him:

> He was a friend to virtue, and in his most playful pages

never forgets what is due to it. A gentleness, delicacy and purity of feeling distinguishes whatever he wrote, and bears a correspondence to the generosity of a disposition which knew no bounds but his last guinea.

So far as I can recall, Goldsmith was the only man that Dr. Johnson ever apologized to for his rudeness. On one occasion at a dinner where they were guests, in the course of the conversation Goldsmith had somewhat petulantly interrupted Johnson, and the latter called him impertinent. At the club that night Goldsmith sat silently brooding over Johnson's reprimand, which Johnson perceiving, said: "I'll make Goldsmith forgive me," and then called to him in a loud voice: "Dr. Goldsmith—something passed today where you and I dined; I ask your pardon." Goldsmith answered: "It must be much from you, sir, that I take ill," and the difference was over and they were on as easy terms as ever.

It was Goldsmith's mission to purify literature and thus to purify manners and character. He lived in an age essentially coarse, when the works of Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett were on every center table and universally read. The "Traveler" and "The Vicar of Wakefield" were published almost contemporaneously with "Tristram Shandy," but London society

did not go wild over Goldsmith and invite him to dinners and receptions, as it did Sterne.

But Goldsmith's idyllic tale survived to be the delight of every generation since, while the clergyman's novel is relegated to corners and the privacy of the study.

Goldsmith gave sweetness, purity, and graciousness to English letters never again to be lost therefrom.

And curiously enough was he equipped for such an undertaking. Everybody knows that simple story, for it has been told and retold so many times, and by such admirable writers. Sir Walter Scott, Prior, Washington Irving, John Forster, Macaulay, Thackeray, and Austin Dobson have all written appreciatively and sympathetically about him, and he occupies a considerable space in Boswell's Johnson, but we never seem to tire of it.

He was born in 1728 at a place called Pallas, in Ireland, his father being a clergyman of the Anglican Church. Everybody knows this kindly shepherd, for he has been immortalized as Dr. Primrose.

When Oliver was still a child he was attacked by the smallpox, which disfigured him for life, and this with his natural awkwardness and apti-

tude for blundering, sorely tried him as long as he lived, for he was naturally vain. It was his desire to shine in company that sometimes made him "talk like poor Poll." But he did not always talk that way, and Boswell, who was jealous of him, is forced to record many a witticism and epigram spoken by Goldsmith well worthy of remembrance.

Needless here to repeat the story of his youth and of his varions attempts to enter one of the learned professions. First it was the church, for which he had no qualifications whatever; then the law, which also was a stumbling-block, and finally medicine, in which he is supposed to have obtained some sort of a degree without much knowledge.

The adventures related by George Primrose in "The Vicar of Wakefield" are based upon his own experiences, and with a flute in his pocket he made the grand tour. After a scrambling and wandering life he finally found his way to London. He was twenty-eight years of age, without much learning in his profession, without friends, and without money.

He tried his profession and failed; he tried school teaching and failed, and then became a bookseller's hack. He tried his hand at all kinds

of writing and led a struggling, bohemian, improvident life, sometimes on the borders of starvation and always in debt. And yet by sheer force of his genius he slowly gained recognition. "Goldsmith," said Johnson afterward, "was a plant that flowered late. There appeared nothing remarkable about him when he was young." He became the friend and companion of Johnson, Burke, and Reynolds and was one of the original nine members that formed "The Club," immortalized in the pages of Boswell.

His struggle for existence, for the mere right to live, was hard and bitter, though it never embittered him. He died April 4, 1774, worn out with anxiety and debt.

Dr. Johnson writing to Boswell said: "Of poor, dear Dr. Goldsmith there is little to be told, more than the papers have made public. He died of a fever, made, I am afraid, more violent by uneasiness of mind. His debts began to be heavy, and all his resources were exhausted. Sir Joshua is of opinion that he owed not less than two thousand pounds. Was ever poet so trusted before?"

"Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, as a comic writer, or as a historian," said Dr. Johnson, "he stands in the first class." And again in

writing to a friend he said, " But let not his frailties be remembered ; he was a very great man."

The world has not since questioned this judgment. He wrote a novel that is still universally read in every modern tongue. His two chief poems are as widely quoted as any in the English language and his comedy of " She Stoops to Conquer " still maintains its place upon the stage. His last poem, the fragment " Retaliation," is one of the most brilliant word portraitures of familiar friends that was ever written.

A tablet to his memory was placed in Westminster Abbey on which is inscribed the glowing epitaph written by Johnson.

The original is in Latin but the following nearly literal translation will give a tolerable idea of the matter of this celebrated epitaph.

Of Oliver Goldsmith—
A Poet, Naturalist, and Historian,
Who left scarcely any style of writing untouched,
And touched nothing that he did not adorn ;
Of all the passions,
Whether smiles were to be moved or tears,
A powerful yet gentle master ;
In genius, sublime, vivid, versatile,
In style, elevated, clear, elegant—
The love of companions,
The fidelity of friends,

And the veneration of readers,
Have by this monument honoured the memory.

He was born in Ireland,
At a place called Pallas,
(In the parish) of Forney, (and county) of Longford,
On the 29th, Nov., 1731,
Educated at (the University of) Dublin
And died in London,
4th April, 1774.

# EDMUND BURKE,

## ORATOR, STATESMAN, PHILOSOPHER.

(1729-1797.)

EDMUND BURKE belongs to the literary as well as to the political history of England. He was a great statesman and orator, but he was also master of an English literary style unsurpassed in any period of our literature. For elevation of thought and splendor of diction we must go to Shakespeare and Bacon to find his equal.

He was, too, a transcendent orator, as we know he must have been when we read his orations, and yet the traditions of the effect of his oratory are conflicting.

We have all heard that he was called "the dinner-bell" of the House of Commons, and that his rising to address the house was the signal for all to leave who could.

Goldsmith's epigram is familiar:

Who too deep for his hearers still went on refining
And thought of convincing while they thought of dining.

He was not a popular speaker, like Fox or Sheridan. His manner was awkward, his voice harsh, his accent Irish, and he often spoke over the heads of his audience. Perhaps his greatest oration is that on "Conciliation with America," which we all read now with infinite delight. It is full of political wisdom and would have saved the American colonies to the mother country, and yet Erskine, who heard it, says that it emptied the House of Commons. On the other hand, we have testimony of the highest character to the thrilling power of his oratory over his audience. Macaulay has described in language never to be forgotten that historic scene in parliament when Burke brought his accusations against Warren Hastings. So tremendous was the eloquence and passion of that great speech that women fainted and men held their breath in agony, while the accused himself felt for a moment that he was indeed a monster of crime. So, too, there are other occasions where Burke's power over his hearers is described, and Fox on more than one occasion spoke of him as a consummate master of eloquence.

There is a good deal of obscurity about Burke's early life. The date of his birth is not definitely known, though the best opinion is that he was born January 12, 1729. The place of his birth

was Dublin, his father being an attorney there. He was educated at Trinity College in his native city. His attendance there was contemporaneous with that of Goldsmith, but there is no evidence that they were acquainted. In truth, there could have been little sympathy at that time between the poor, ballad-mongering, dreaming, unstudious sizar and the ambitious youth who was even then looking out upon the great world and reading profoundly in philosophy, in history, and in general literature.

In 1750 he passed over to London and commenced his law studies, but did not take kindly to the practice of law, much to his father's anger, who withdrew the son's allowance, or so reduced it that it was impossible for him to live on it. This drove him to literature, but concerning seven or eight of the years succeeding his arrival in London our information is extremely slight. He led a more or less irregular life ; that is to say, he was sometimes in one part of Great Britain, sometimes in another, and sometimes in France. He had serious thoughts of coming to America, and there were rumors afloat during his lifetime that he at one time actually visited this country. A stock anecdote of him is to the effect that he applied for the chair of moral philosophy at the

University of Glasgow and was rejected, together with David Hume, in favor of a person named James Clow. There is no truth in the story, nor in another that he was a favored lover of Peg Woffington.

Some time in 1756 he married a lady of great excellence, the daughter of Dr. Nugent, a London physician, and the same year he published his first two works—"A Vindication of Natural Society" and the essay on "The Sublime and Beautiful."

Burke belongs to that splendid group of literary men of which Dr. Johnson was the center, which has been immortalized by Boswell. Their common bond was literature, for they probably agreed on no other subject. The friendship between Johnson and Burke was lifelong, and when it is considered that the former was a Tory of the most prejudiced kind, who delighted in abusing the Whigs, and invariably described the devil as the first Whig, and that Burke was the foremost Whig writer and politician of his time, there must have been something very vital in the tie that bound them together. And certainly their mutual admiration and respect is a beautiful thing to see. Johnson is unvarying in his praise of Burke. One of the best known passages in "Bos-

well" is that in which Johnson says: "Mr. Burke is a man that if you met him for the first time in the street, where you were stopped by a shower, and you and he stepped aside to take shelter for five minutes, he would talk to you in such a manner that when you parted you would say: 'This is an extraordinary man.'"

When he was first elected to parliament Johnson said: "Now we who have known Mr. Burke know that he will be one of the first men in the country." And Burke thoroughly returned the appreciation. He loved the venerable sage of Bolt Court, and when some one said on a certain occasion that Johnson had too much monopolized the conversation, Burke replied: "Nay, it is enough for me to have rung the bell for him."

And yet notwithstanding his splendid powers he had to contest every step of his way. He was looked upon as an Irish adventurer and was supposed to be a Jesuit in disguise. All sorts of unpleasant and untruthful rumors were set afloat concerning him, and he had to encounter them over and over again.

Burke's public life may be divided in three parts. First, his advocacy of the rights of the American colonists, extending from 1766, from

the period of the Stamp Act, until 1783, when independence was acknowledged.

His American speeches will last as long as literature endures, for besides being written in a style of rare beauty they embrace principles of truth and justice that have their foundation in human experience, expressed in the most admirable spirit and temper and with the greatest elevation of thought.

The second part of his life was connected with India, culminating in the impeachment proceedings against Hastings, and the third was his opposition to the French revolution.

His Indian speeches are full of wisdom and statesmanship, but they contain greater passion. The crimes of Hastings stirred Burke to the depths of his soul, and he took upon himself the burden of bringing the oppressor of India to condign punishment. He pursued the great proconsul with a rage that was little less then holy, for it had its seat in the noblest instincts of human nature. The result of that great trial turned finally on other questions than absolute justice, so that Hastings was acquitted, and history has justified the verdict. But that does not detract from Burke's just fame.

His works on the French revolution are im-

bued with the same ardor and passion as his Hastings speeches, and are magnificent specimens of reasoning and the passionate love of justice and humanity. They are the most ornate and finished of all his writings.

His wonderful knowledge, his lofty reason, his splendid style, and his unwearying ardor for virtue and morality make him a model for all time.

# DAVID GARRICK.

(1716–1799.)

THERE are few more interesting figures of the Johnsonian period than David Garrick. He was fond of literature and of the society of literary men. Not long after the club of which Sir Joshua Reynolds and Dr. Johnson were the founders was established Reynolds happened to speak to Garrick about it and tell something of its scope. "I like it much," replied the great actor. "I think I shall be of you."

Reynolds repeated this conversation to Johnson, who was always quick to resent anything that looked like condescension or patronage, and was much displeased at Garrick's conceit. "He'll be of us! How does he know we'll permit him? The first duke in England has no right to hold such language."

However, Johnson was a placable man, and indeed really loved Garrick, so when the latter's name was proposed for membership Johnson warmly supported him and he was elected.

It was an impromptu epitaph that Garrick made one evening in an encounter of wits with Goldsmith that was the provocation for the latter's exquisite poem, "Retaliation," in which are preserved for us the portraits of the members of the famous club.

Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll.

Goldsmith, like Addison, was not clever at repartee, and could not reply on the instant, but after his death, which occurred not long afterward, the unfinished poem of "Retaliation" was found among his papers. He thus describes Garrick:

Here lies David Garrick, describe me who can,
An abridgment of all that was pleasant in man.
As an actor, confessed without rival to shine;
As a wit, if not first, in the very first line,
Yet with talents like these, with an excellent heart,
The man had his failings, a dupe to his art.
Like an ill-judging beauty, his colors he spread,
And he plastered with rouge his own natural red.
On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting;
'Twas only that when he was off he was acting.
Though secure of our hearts, yet confoundedly sick,
If they were not his own by finessing and trick;
He cast off his friends, like a huntsman his pack,
For he knew when he pleased he could whistle them back.

This aptly hits off both the virtues and the weaknesses of the great actor.

Garrick's fame as an actor has obscured his literary work, which was very respectable and is worthy of remembrance. He wrote, adapted, or collaborated some forty plays, and was the author of many songs, odes, prologues, and epilogues. Some of his plays held the stage after his death and all were successful under his own management. He was thoroughly versed in English, French, and Italian literature. He had a fine library containing many rare treasures and was a devoted Shakespearean.

From some of Johnson's hasty comments it might be inferred that Garrick was parsimonious, but this is not true, as Johnson on other occasions admitted. He acquired a large fortune and was generous in giving to charitable objects. The old doctor was not always just to Garrick, but he would never permit any one else to criticise him. Reynolds once said that the doctor considered Garrick his own private property. One of Sir Joshua's most amusing performances is two dialogues, one between himself and Johnson, when the latter abuses Garrick when Reynolds is praising him, and the other where Johnson defends Garrick against Gibbon's criticism. They are capital fun.

Garrick and Johnson were born in the same

town, Lichfield, and during his boyhood Garrick attended Johnson's school, Johnson being eight years the elder. In 1737 they left their native town and went up to London in search of fortune, with very few pence in their pockets. They soon parted, Johnson to pursue the dark and unpropitious paths of literature and Garrick to essay various employments, until finally his passion for the stage drew him irresistibly to it. He first tried private theatricals and then some minor parts, but finally, on October 19, 1741, he made his famous appearance as Richard III., being announced as "a gentleman who had never appeared on any stage." His success was immediate, his representation taking the town by storm. Pope, failing and in ill-health, went to see him, and declared that he never had an equal as an actor and would never have a rival. Dukes, great parliament men, Mr. Pitt, cabinet ministers and all the fashionables were to be seen in the front boxes nightly, applauding the young actor to the echo. Part after part he added to his repertory, in comedy as well as tragedy, and he succeeded equally in all with the exception of perhaps Othello, in which he was successful but not great. His Lear was from the first superb. His rival at another theater was Spranger Barry, a popular actor of the day.

An epigram was printed, contrasting the two actors:

The town has found out different ways
To praise its different Lears;
To Barry it gives loud huzzas,
To Garrick only tears.

A king! Aye, every inch a king,
Such Barry doth appear;
But Garrick's quite another thing,
He's every inch King Lear.

For thirty-five years Garrick was the monarch of the English stage. On the 10th of June, 1776, he gave his farewell performance. No flaming posters announced the event, and the bill of the play simply stated it was for the benefit of the theatrical fund, a charity that had been founded by Garrick. It was known, however, that it was to be his last appearance on the stage, and the theater was packed. The prologue was written and spoken by him, and contains a line that has become part of our common speech. Referring to the object of the performance, he said:

Their cause I plead—plead it in heart and mind;
A fellow-feeling makes one wondrous kind.

At the close, in an affecting speech, Garrick bade farewell to the stage and retired to private

life. He died two years later and is buried in Westminster Abbey. His death, Dr. Johnson wrote, "has eclipsed the gayety of nations and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."

At another time Johnson said: "Garrick was a very good man, the cheerfulest man of his age, a decent liver in a profession which is supposed to give indulgence to licentiousness, and a man who gave away freely money acquired by himself."

Garrick's domestic life was very happy. In 1746 he married Eva Maria Violetta, a stage dancer of rare beauty as well as loveliness of character, who had come to London from Vienna with letters of introduction from the Empress Maria Theresa. She long survived him, dying in 1822 at the great age of ninety-eight.

# JAMES THOMSON.

(1700–1748.

WHEN Pope died he left a school of poetry but no successor able to wield the mighty wand which he laid down. The nearest approach to it was made by Samuel Johnson in his two poems, "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes." The first was published in 1738 and the other in 1748, and they have the merit of being the best poems in Pope's manner published up to that time. But it was a dark day for poets, and particularly for those who were imitators of Pope, for he had exhausted all the resources of the heroic couplet, and the world was now ready to listen to some other form of song, though not yet ready to pay for it.

The first poet to break away from the rigid formula in which English poesy then seemed to be irrevocably locked was James Thomson, who sought freedom in the earlier forms of Milton and Spenser. He returned to nature and by appealing to the universal consciousness found a

response in the hearts of the multitude. I quote the following stanzas from "The Castle of Indolence," a poem not so much read as it once was, but still worthy of every reader's attention:

A pleasing land of drowsyhed it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
Forever flushing round a summer sky;
There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh;
But whate'er smack'd of noyance, or unrest,
Was far, far off expell'd from this delicious rest.

* * * * * * *

A bard here dwelt, more fat than bard beseems,
Who, void of envy, guile, and lust of gain,
On virtue still, and nature's pleasing themes
Poured forth his unpremeditated strain;
The world forsaking with a calm disdain.
Here laughed he careless in his easy seat;
Here quaff'd, encircled with the joyous train
Of moralizing sage; his ditty sweet
He loathed much to write, ne, cared to repeat.

* * * * * * *

I care not, Fortune, what you me deny,
You can not rob me of free nature's grace;
You can not shut the windows of the sky,
Through which Aurora shows her brightening face;
You can not bar my constant feet to trace
The woods and lawns, by living stream, at eve;
Let health my nerves and finer fibers brace,

> And I their toys to the great children leave ;
> Of fancy, reason, virtue, naught can me bereave.

The poem is in the Spenserian stanza and is full of an opulent luxury and dreamy repose, for the "Valley of Indolence" is in the land of the lotus eaters where poets love to dwell.

Byron greatly admired this poem and placed it above "The Seasons," and it was from this he learned to use the Spenserian stanza in his own poetry.

There is no English poet whose actual rank is so little disputed as that of James Thomson. No one has ever dreamed of placing him in the first flight of poets. He has no such range as Dryden or Pope, Shelley or Byron, Keats or Tennyson, but he has always been popular. It is safe to say that Thomson's volume forms a part of every household library, the one book of poetry that everybody reads. It seems to have been the first book of poetry known to Tennyson, who toward the close of his life wrote to his son : "According to the best of my recollection, when I was about eight years old, I covered two sides of a slate with Thomsonian blank verse in praise of flowers for my brother Charles, who was a year older than I was, Thomson being the only poet I knew."

## JAMES THOMSON.

James Thomson was born near Kelso, in Scotland, Sept. 11, 1700. He was the son of a clergyman, and was himself destined for the same career, but his poetic instinct led him to the path of letters. In Thomson's day it was not a particularly attractive path. The day of patrons was disappearing and the day of the public had not yet arrived. A poet had to depend upon a patron or starve. Johnson and Savage starved. Thomson was fortunate enough to find patrons, and by the help of a public sinecure was enabled to live.

In 1725 he went to London with a poem in his pocket. It was the "Winter" of "The Seasons." At first he suffered a good deal of privation, but after a time he prospered better through the help of a few persons of rank, to whom he commended himself by dedications and flattering letters. But for some years his living was somewhat precarious. The poem of "Winter" appeared in 1726, and against the natural order proved to be the harbinger of "The Seasons." It brought him fame and but little else. Nevertheless, it was widely read and obtained for the struggling poet the acquaintance of Pope and other celebrities of the day. The next year "Summer" was written and published; in 1728 the part of "Spring" followed, and in 1730 the

entire poem was completed by the addition of the "Autumn." Meantime he had written other poems and some plays, which were acted at Drury Lane, but met with little success. Last of all, in 1746 he published "The Castle of Indolence," which he had been at work on for many years, having bestowed on it an amount of labor that he gave to no other of his works. His death followed in 1748. A monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey in 1762.

In one of his outdoor rhapsodies Christopher North says: "Thomson poured his genius over a subject of universal interest and 'The Seasons' from that hour to this—then, now and forever—have been, are and will be loved and admired by all the world. All over Scotland 'The Seasons' is a household book. It lies in many thousand cottages." Coleridge once saw a copy of the poem torn and dog's-eared on the window seat of an alehouse and exclaimed: "This is fame!" There is probably no English poet whose merits are so little disputed as Thomson and he probably has hundreds of readers where Milton has one. This is not saying that he is a greater poet than Milton, for he does not stand even in the second rank of poets, but his theme is one that appeals to the universal consciousness. All men

are observers of nature and it pleases them to recognize their own thoughts and feelings expressed with a power and justice they are themselves incapable of giving them. As the revolving seasons come and go their charm, their beauty, their majesty or their terror is more keenly perceived and acknowledged because of some familiar line of the poet that involuntarily arises in the memory. It is Thomson's faithfulness to nature that ranks "The Seasons" so high in English poetry, in spite of its many faults. He says:

> I solitary court
> The inspiring breeze, and meditate the book
> Of Nature, ever open; aiming thence,
> Warm from the heart, to pour the moral song.

And it is because he does this that for more than a century and a half it has been one of the first volumes of poetry placed in the hands of youth.

One aspect of Thomson's poetry has been well summed up in a verse by his friend, Lord Lyttleton:

> For his chaste muse employed her heaven taught lyre,
> None but the noblest passions to inspire.
> Not one immoral, one corrupted thought,
> One line, which, dying, he could wish to blot.

Dr. Johnson, whose life of the poet is not very friendly, his dislike being probably founded on the fact that he was a Scotchman, considered him very original, both in thought and execution, and this judgment is never likely to be impugned. The great mass of his writings, his tragedies and all his poems save two, has long since been forgotten, but "The Seasons" and "Castle of Indolence" easily maintain their place in English literature.

# THOMAS GRAY,

## MOST FASTIDIOUS OF POETS.

(1716–1771.)

EVERYBODY knows, or at least everybody ought to know, by heart Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." In fact, its lines and phrases are so inlaid in our colloquial speech that one memorizes much of it involuntarily. No poem in the language has been so much quoted, not any of Shakespeare's or Pope's. It contains but one hundred and twenty-eight lines, and seventy-one of them will be found in Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations," which only gives those that are the most commonly quoted. There is scarcely a line in it from beginning to end that has not been used at one time or another by some writer or speaker the better to express or illustrate his thought. This shows how deeply the poem is impressed on the mind and heart of every reader. Doctor Johnson, who greatly dis-

liked Gray, once said to Boswell there were only two good stanzas in the elegy, and when Boswell asked him to point them out he quoted the stanza beginning "For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey" as one, and said he had forgotten the other. But when he came to write "The Lives of the Poets" and express himself critically, while sharply censuring Gray's other poems he said:

> In the character of his "Elegy" I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claims to poetical honors. "The Churchyard" abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo.

This touches the true merit of the poem; its imagery and sentiment find a response in every mind and heart.

Gray was perhaps the most fastidious poet that ever lived, and this accounts for the scantiness of his poetical performances. All that he wrote, or rather all that he published, can be put in a small volume; but he wrote with immense industry. Not even Pope rewrote and polished his lines as Gray did. He followed the advice of Horace and kept his poem for nine years before publishing it.

The "Elegy" was begun in 1742, and it was not published until 1750, and then it appeared without the poet's consent, in one of the magazines of the day. The authorized edition came out in 1751. As it appeared in 1750 the poem contained two stanzas that have since been universally admired, but which the poet omitted from the authorized version through mere hypercriticism. The following are the lines unfamiliar probably to a great many readers:

There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen, are showers of violets found;
The red-breast loves to build and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground.

Him have we seen the greenwood side along,
While o'er the heath we hied, our labors done,
Oft as the woodlark piped her farewell song,
With wistful eyes pursue the setting sun,

Of the first of these stanzas James Russell Lowell said that "Gray might run his pen through this, but he could not obliterate it from the memory of men. Wordsworth himself never achieved a simplicity of language so pathetic in suggestion, so musical in movement as this." And Lowell is not alone in this opinion. Wherever they are known and read these verses have been as much admired as any other in the poem.

The curious reader perhaps would like to know why Gray canceled these verses and whereabouts in the poem they occurred. They formed part of what is called the parenthesis of the poem before the epitaph. They follow the stanza which contains the lines :

> There at the foot of yonder spreading beech
> That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
> His listless length at noontide would he stretch
> And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

In their context they are far more beautiful than separated from it, but Gray ruthlessly and in spite of the protests of his friends cut them out. Why ? Because he thought they made the parenthesis too long. This was his sole reason, and it shows what a fastidious writer he was.

Gray lived at Cambridge University almost all his life and was a retiring but eager scholar. He was small in stature, with the pallor of the student, deep set eyes, aquiline nose, thin lips and a halting walk. His life was spent among books and in his own day he was considered the most learned man in Europe. The mere list of his studies is almost paralyzing to read, embracing as it does every subject of human knowledge and research. The last thing he cared for was to be called a

poet or an author. He refused the laureateship, shrank from all kinds of popularity and distinctly declined to be pointed out as a celebrity. He had no ambition and never dreamed of fame.

His particular friends were Horace Walpole and William Mason, and his letters, while not at all equal to Walpole's or to Cowper's, are very fine and have high literary quality. His diaries also are delightful reading. In the letters we see something of the artificial side of Gray's character but we also discover the lovableness of the timid and reticent scholar.

# WILLIAM COLLINS.

(1721-1759.)

THERE are few poems in English literature that possess throughout more charm than Collins' "Ode to Evening."

If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own brawling springs;
Thy springs and dying gales.

* * * * * * *

For when thy folding star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp,
The fragrant Houris and Elves
Who slept in buds the day.

And many a Nymph who wreathes her brow with sedge
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
The Pensive Pleasures sweet
Prepare thy shadowy car.

* * * * * * *

While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve;
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy lingering light;

While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves,
Or winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train
And rudely rends thy robes;

So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, Smiling Peace,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And love thy favorite name!

The music of these exquisite lines is a perpetual delight to those who master them, and makes the fall of evening forever charming. Few poets have expressed in more harmonious rhythm and imagery the evanescent mood that appears and disappears when the day is done and "the pensive pleasures sweet" come forth to greet us.

Collins is better known to the world by his ode on "The Passions," which has been declaimed by schoolboys, actors, and elocutionists for more than a century. In its brief compass of barely one hundred and twenty lines it presents a marvelous gallery of pictures depicting the various passions of the mind, fear, anger, despair, jealousy, revenge, melancholy, hope, joy, and love. It is too familiar to need quotation here.

Collins will always be an interesting figure in English literature because of his unhappy fate. The contemporary of Johnson, Gray, Goldsmith, and Thomson, he lived in the darkest hour of

our literature—"He was the most neglected author of his time, and was so disappointed at the sale of a volume of poems that he fell into a melancholy that ended in insanity.

William Collins was born December 25, 1721, and was educated at Winchester and Oxford. From boyhood he wrote verses that gave promise of early success and fame. His genius revolted against the dead uniformity and "correctness" of the heroic conflict that Pope brought to perfection and which Johnson thought was the only form in which great poetry could be written. But his revolt, like all new movements, at first reacted chiefly against himself and the public refused to listen to him.

In 1744 he went to London, as Johnson says, "a literary adventurer, with many projects in his head, and very little money in his pocket." The brief biography of him in "The Lives of the Poets" is pathetic and full of sympathy, for Johnson well knew from his own bitter experience the trials and temptations that beset the literary hack and poet, dependent upon his pen. He himself passed fairly unscathed through that ordeal, but he could extenuate the failings and excuse the vices of his weaker brethren, and he says of Collins:

In a long continuance of poverty and long habits of dissipation it can not be expected that any character should be exactly uniform. There is a degree of want by which the freedom of agency is almost destroyed, and long association with fortuitous companions will at last relax the strictness of truth and abate the fervor of sincerity. That this man, wise and virtuous as he was, passed almost unentangled through the snares of life, it would be prejudice and temerity to affirm, but it may be said that at least he preserved the source of action unpolluted; that his principles were never shaken; that his distinctions of right and wrong were never confounded, and that his faults had nothing of malignity or design, but proceeded from some unexpected pressure or casual temptation.

In addition to his odes Collins wrote a few other poems, the chief of which are the Oriental or Persian Eclogues. These are distinguished by simplicity of description and expression, showing much of the rich and peculiar diction we find in his best efforts. But they also discover haste and carelessness.

It is the distinction of Collins that at a time when Pope's influence was still felt he sought to restore poetry to its ancient beauty of form. He aimed to stir the heart and move the soul. He and Gray anticipated Cowper, the founder of the modern school of poetry. Neither Gray nor Collins wrote enough to make an immediate impression on their time. Both of them died

without a suspicion of the fame that awaited them.

When the awakening came the poems of Collins found their just appreciation, and they will always hold a high place in our literature.

Collins' works are less even than Gray's, in quantity. He was a man of wide reading and was well versed in both the ancient and modern languages, but his indolence, save under the greatest pressure, was unconquerable. Johnson relates a characteristic anecdote:

> One day I was admitted to him when he was immured by a bailiff that was prowling in the street. On this occasion recourse was had to the bookseller's, who on the credit of a translation of Aristotle's poetics, which he engaged to write, with a large commentary, advanced as much money as enabled him to escape into the country. He showed me the guineas safe in his hand. Soon afterward his uncle, Mr. Martin, a lieutenant-colonel, left him about £2,000, a sum which Collins could scarcely think exhaustible, and he did not live to exhaust. The guineas were then repaid and the translation neglected.

In "The Castle of Indolence" Thomson describes some of the inmates of that delightful valley, and among them Collins.

> Of all the gentle tenants of the place
> There was a man of special grave remark;
> A certain tender gloom o'erspread his face,

Pensive, not sad, in thought involved, not dark,
As soon this man could sing as morning lark,
And teach the noblest morals of the heart;
But these his talents were buried stark;
Of the fine stores he nothing would impart,

* * * * * * *

Which, or born nature gave, or nature painting art.
Ten thousand glorious systems would he build,
Ten thousand great ideas filled his mind;
But with the clouds they fled, and left no trace behind.

Collins retired to his native town upon his accession to fortune, but he did not live long.

# EDWARD YOUNG.

(1681–1765.)

UNDER judicial analysis Young's "Night Thoughts" does not attain a high poetic standard and yet there is little question that it meets with the approval of the generality of readers. Few poems are more popular even in these days, and it has been quoted so much for nearly two centuries that many of its lines have become imbedded in the language and are used by every one. All will recognize the following:

Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.

---

To waft a feather or to drown a fly.

---

Insatiate archer! could not one suffice?

---

Procrastination is the thief of time.

How blessings brighten as they take their flight.

---

At thirty man suspects himself a fool;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan.

---

And feels a thousand deaths in fearing one.

---

Death loves a shining mark.

---

The man that blushes is not quite a brute.

---

Pygmies are pygmies still, though percht on Alps,
And pyramids are pyramids in vales.

---

In Bartlett's volume of "Familiar Quotations," Young's poem occupies about the same space as "Hamlet," or "The Essay on Man," or any of Dryden's poems. This, at least, speaks well for its popularity, if not for its greatness as poetry.

And the reason is not so far to seek. "Night Thoughts" expresses the average feeling of sentimentality, and appeals to the common thought of men and women. This gives it a power that few other poems possess.

Edward Young was born in 1681. He was educated at Winchester and Oxford, and came

upon public life almost contemporary with Addison, Steele and Gay, when every opportunity of patronage was offered to young men of genius. The famous and very dissolute Duke of Wharton, whom Macaulay so well describes, became his patron, settled an annuity upon him and tried to get him into parliament. Meantime Young began to publish his poems. Then he essayed tragedy and wrote two plays for the theater—"Busiris," acted in 1719, and "The Revenge," brought out at Drury Lane in 1721. These plays met with a good degree of success, and possessed very considerable merit. From any point of view they may be said to rank quite as high as Addison's "Cato." Next he published under the title of "Love of Fame" a series of satires which abound in acute observation, pregnant reflection and polished wit. They show knowledge of books, experience of society, and acquaintance with human life. One epigram after another may be culled from them, as for instance:

None think the great unhappy but the great.

Be wise with speed,
A fool at forty is a fool indeed.

Some for renown on scraps of learning dote,
And think they grow immortal as they quote.

How commentators each dark passage shun,
And hold their farthing candle to the sun.

In 1728 Young took holy orders, as that seemed to offer him the best inducement for a livelihood, and was then appointed chaplain to George II., a virtual sinecure. If there was one official more than another that old George didn't care to see, it was his chaplain, so that the Rev. Edward Young's duties were very light.

He married somewhat late in life and soon thereafter lost his wife and stepdaughter, and it was after their death that he wrote the poem which has given him his fame. In 1742 the first part of "Night Thoughts" was published and from that day till this, despite the critics, the poem has been popular and widely read.

Many persons are driven from the poem because they esteem it sad or gloomy. It is not this precisely, but it is somber. It expresses, and it expresses deeply, the thoughts that come to the reflective soul in the watches of the night, when he looks out upon the stars of heaven or when he contemplates the fleeting aspects of human life. The poem is full of striking metaphors, and in a sense of epigrams that fasten themselves in the memory never to be forgotten. Who is

there, after looking out upon the starry space, can challenge such a line as this:

> An undevout astronomer is mad?

One may not be convinced by the arguments for immortality that Young presents in the course of his poem, and yet how strongly and compactly he puts the case:

> All on earth is shadow, all beyond
> Is substance.
>
> The spider's most attenuated thread
> Is cord, is cable, to man's slender tie
> On earthly bliss.
>
> All men think all men mortal but themselves.

These and a thousand other similar phrases, never to be forgotten, show how naturally Young struck the level of human thought. His poem is somber, as we have said, is even mournful at times, for he dwells profoundly on death and the grave, but there runs through it all a cheerful theology, and there may be found at times a benevolence and a sunny temper that lightens up much gloom.

"Night Thoughts" is an "In Memoriam," and the sorrows of humanity and the bitter partings that must come to every human soul have

seldom been described in strains of greater consolation. They cheer the despondent heart and inspire a tenderness that soothes and sustains the mourner.

Young's poetry met with praise from Dr. Johnson, who accorded it a large degree of originality, varied with deep reflections and striking allusions.

# HORACE WALPOLE.

## (1717–1797.)

FEW men in our literary history have been more discussed than Horace Walpole, particularly since Macaulay's famous essay in 1833. Like all of Macaulay's portraits, Walpole is drawn in the most vivid of colors and in a style at once popular and striking. The result is that notwithstanding the dissent of other critics from portions of the portraiture it remains the accepted one in every substantial feature.

Andrew Lang and Leslie Stephen have both attempted to modify and correct Macaulay's criticism, but without much success. Austin Dobson, who has written one of the best and most interesting memoirs of Walpole that we have, does not widely differ from the great essayist.

In truth Walpole is a subject peculiarly adapted to Macaulay's pen, abounding as he does in the strangest inconsistencies. The following paragraph

in the essay summing up Walpole's character has been the most criticised:

He was, unless we have formed a very erroneous judgment of his character, the most eccentric, the most artificial, the most fastidious, the most capricious of men. His mind was a bundle of inconsistent whims and affectations. His features were covered by mask within mask. When the outer disguise of obvious affectation was removed you were still as far as ever from seeing the real man. He played innumerable parts and overacted them all. When he talked misanthropy he out-Timoned Timon. When he talked philanthropy he left Howard at an immeasurable distance. He scoffed at courts and kept a chronicle of their most trifling scandal; at society, and was blown about by its slightest veerings of opinion; at literary fame, and left fair copies of his private letters, with copious notes, to be published after his decease; at rank, and never for a moment forgot that he was an honorable; at the practice of entail, and tasked the ingenuity of conveyancers to tie up his villa in the strictest settlement. The conformation of his mind was such that whatever was little seemed to him great, and whatever was great seemed to him little. Serious business was a trifle to him, and trifles were his serious business.

Mr. Lang calls this "analyzing character with a cleaver," and undoubtedly it is in the true Macaulay style, but there is not a sentence in it that cannot be supported by citations from Walpole's writings or the testimony of those who knew him.

It was one of Walpole's affectations to refuse

to be considered an author. He wrote a book entitled "Royal and Noble Authors," but when his friend and correspondent wrote a complimentary letter to him praising his style and learning, he replied:

I know nothing. How should I? I, who have always lived in the big, busy world; who lie abed all the morning, calling it morning as long as you please; who sup in company; who have played at faro half my life; and now at loo till two or three in the morning; who have always loved pleasure; haunted auctions. . . . How I have laughed when some of the magazines have called me the learned gentleman! Pray don't be like the magazines.

Nor, with the exception of the Poet Gray did he ever associate with authors, and he had known Gray at the university and afterwards traveled with him. And he was contemporary with Fielding, Richardson, Johnson, Goldsmith, and Sterne, but for none of them did he ever express the least sympathy or respect.

He calls Dr. Johnson an "odious and mean character, arrogant, self-sufficient and over-bearing." In one of his letters he says:

I have no thirst to know the rest of my contemporaries, from the absurd bombast of Dr. Johnson down to the silly Dr. Goldsmith. Though the latter changeling has had bright gleams of parts, and the former had sense until he changed it for words and sold it for a pension.

It was he who called Goldsmith "an inspired idiot." And yet contemptuous as he was of authors, he spent all the time he could spare from gossip and gambling in authorship.

In 1764 he published his novel, "The Castle of Otranto," which set a new fashion in fiction, and founded a new school of romance. He was the forerunner of Mrs. Radcliffe and Mrs. Roche. It is called a Gothic romance and he gives the following account of its origin in one of his letters to a correspondent:

Shall I even confess to you what was the origin of this romance? I waked one morning, in the beginning of last June, from a dream, of which all I could recover was that I thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armor. In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it—add that I was very glad to think of anything rather than politics. In short, I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking in the middle of a paragraph.

When first published it purported to be a trans-

lation from the Italian and did not bear Walpole's name.

It proved so successful that in a second edition Walpole acknowledged the authorship.

To the novel readers of the eighteenth century it was an awe-inspiring tale, and Gray, who was the most inveterate of novel readers, wrote to Walpole: "I have received 'The Castle of Otranto,' and return you my thanks for it. It engages our attention here, makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights."

"The Castle of Otranto," is a grewsome tale, but not particularly interesting to the readers of this generation.

The scene is laid in a Gothic castle, with a labyrinth of vaulted passages beneath, one of which opens into a church near by. Manfred, the prince of Otranto, is the occupant of the castle, he having inherited the principality from his grandfather, who usurped it from the rightful prince, the Marquis of Vicenza, the heir of Alfonso the Good.

Manfred has two children, a boy and a girl, and in order to preserve the title to Otranto determines to marry his son, aged fifteen, to Isabella, the only child of the Marquis of Vicenza. The latter is in the Holy Land, and Manfred se-

cures possession of Isabella and makes preparations for the wedding. When the guests are assembled in the chapel it is discovered that the boy bridegroom is missing. Search is made, and the body of the boy, crushed to death under an immense helmet of black steel with huge black plumes, is found in the court. Nobody knows where the helmet has come from until a peasant exclaims that it resembles the helmet on the head of the black marble statue of Alfonso the Good, in the church.

The peasant is arrested as a necromancer and condemned by Manfred to be starved to death.

Manfred next divorces his wife that he may himself marry Isabella and thus preserve his title. Isabella of course objects and many intrigues and adventures follow. Whenever Manfred is on the point of succeeding, the plumes in the helmet become agitated and rustle against a window of the castle. But this has no terror for him, and he exclaims, "Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs," and he is about to carry Isabella off, when the portrait of his grandfather, the original usurper, heaves a deep sigh, walks out of its frame, and beckons to Manfred to follow him. This gives Isabella an opportunity to escape.

Trap doors and ghosts abound, and in the end

the castle is destroyed, Manfred is killed, and the true heir comes into his own.

Walpole's next work was a tragedy entitled "The Mysterious Mother" in blank verse. It was never acted, although the author wrote an epilogue for Mrs. Clive to speak. Byron praises the play, but Scott and Macaulay say it has no merit. The very name of it made Miss Burney shudder.

He also wrote "Historic Doubts on Richard III.," in which he undertook to prove that Richard was not the tyrant and murderer that history has made him out to be. The argument is not convincing.

His two historical works, the memoirs of the reign of George II. and George III., are very interesting, giving much of the secret history of those reigns, but the greatest of his writings is his "Letters" addressed to various private friends and published after his death. They are indeed a history of English society during a large part of the eighteenth century. Living in London a greater part of the period he kept his correspondents informed of what was going on, at court, in society, at the clubs, and in parliament. He was a keen observer and had a sure hand in describing what he saw. The littleness of great men, the

hypocrisy of virtuous men, the self-seeking of patriots, the pretentiousness of mediocrity, all this and more may be found in these brilliant pages. They contain the quintessence of amusing gossip, with witty, sarcastic, and sometimes malicious comment. Here he tells of the highwayman Macleane and his feats, of his arrest, trial, and execution, there he narrates the trial of the Scotch lords for high treason. The escapades of Miss Chudleigh, her marriages, and her trial for bigamy are all related, what mobs of people followed the beautiful Miss Gunnings through the streets and parks, what bets Charles Fox made at the clubs, and the last good saying of George Selwyn. They are all delightful and charming.

Horatio Walpole—or Horace as he himself always wrote it—was born September 24, 1717, O. S., a date corresponding to October 5 under the present calendar. He was the reputed youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, the great prime minister. Gossip, however, assigns him a different parentage and that he was the son of Lord Hervey—Pope's "Lord Fanny"—who was one of his mother's admirers. Lady Louisa Stuart, the daughter of the first Earl of Bute, makes this charge in her memoirs, and it is supported by other private chronicles of the time. It is also said that phys-

ically and mentally he resembled the Herveys, and had little in common with the robust, coarse, fox-hunting and deep-drinking prime minister. On the other hand it is to be said that Horace had no suspicion of such a parentage; that he was deeply attached to his father and mother, and that Sir Robert provided for him as he did for his other children.

Horace was educated at Eton and Cambridge, and at the latter place had the poet Gray for friend and companion. Gray was subsequently one of Walpole's correspondents.

After making the grand tour Walpole at the age of twenty-four was elected to parliament and served continuously for twenty-six years, though he never made politics his serious business.

After his father's death in 1745 Horace removed to the famous house—with "pie crust battlements"—at Twickenham, on the Thames, known as Strawberry Hill, which is imperishably associated with his name. Here he resided until March 2, 1797, when he died in his eightieth year. He was never married.

# BOSWELL AND HIS BOOK.

(1740–1795.)

THE key to eighteenth century literature is Boswell's "Life of Johnson," new editions of which still come from the press as if it were one of the most popular of novels. In fact, it always has been one of the most popular of books since it first appeared in 1791, and in the many years of its existence new editions have been published every four or five years with notes and comments by various editors.

It will be remembered that it was Croker's first edition of this great book, published in 1831, that gave Macaulay the opportunity to "beat Croker black and blue." "See if I do not dust that varlet's jacket in the next number of the Blue and Yellow," writes Macaulay to his sister, concerning Croker. And there is little question that he did it. As a specimen of the old-fashioned horse-whip style of critical castigation Macaulay on Croker's Boswell leads all the rest.

But after it was all over and the editor was soundly thrashed, Macaulay closed his review by thanking Mr. Croker, notwithstanding his shortcomings, for having induced him to read once again Boswell's fascinating volumes. For fascinating they most assuredly are by the unanimous verdict of every class of reader and critic in all the years since they were first published. They contain not only the biography of a great man, but the history of a literary epoch.

But many as there have been of admirers of Boswell's book, there have been few enough admirers of Boswell himself. Never was a book and its author so distinctly separated in the general contemplation as in this case. Even the editors who have thrived on Boswell's labors speak of him as a rule with contempt.

There have been several biographies of James Boswell and attempts to rescue the great biographer from the pillory in which Macaulay placed him.

The truth is that when Macaulay once placed his mark on a man, even where it has been pointed out that he was in some error, that mark, save perhaps in the single instance of William Penn, where he was singularly misled by a confusion of names, has remained, and the world has

accepted his judgment. It is so with James II., Marlborough, Warren Hastings, Impey, Dr. Johnson, Boswell, Croker, Robert Montgomery, and countless others in that splendid gallery, the perpetual delight of the English-speaking world.

Nevertheless since Macaulay wrote new materials concerning Boswell have come to light, among others the letters he wrote to his intimate friend, Temple, and it is well enough for us to consider again and obtain a fresh view if possible of one who has given the world so much pleasure.

The truth is, however, he reveals himself so vividly in his biography of Johnson, that we need nothing else as a revelation of his character or as an account of his life.

In our literary history there is no stranger compound than this same James Boswell, whom Goldsmith called a "Scotch bur that Tom Davies threw at Johnson, and he has stuck ever since." Even the garrulous and confidential Pepys is not his equal, though the two marvelously resemble each other.

Boswell possessed almost every quality that is offensive to men, and his name was synonymous with bore. He was vain, boastful, inquisitive, a drunkard, a babbler, an eavesdropper, and a coward. His intellectual qualities were of no

high order and his reasoning ability not beyond that of a youth of eighteen. He was educated for the Scotch bar, but never achieved the least distinction in his profession.

He pushed himself forward everywhere, whether he was wanted or not, and became acquainted with almost everybody of eminence in his time. Johnson at first rebuffed him in a way that would have crushed any person of ordinary sensibility, then endured him, and at last embraced him. He could not be shaken off, nor frightened by sarcasm or satire. He forced his society on Hume, Paoli, Burns, Wilkes, Voltaire, Rousseau, Chatham, Elibank, Hailes, Adam Smith, and Horace Walpole, and the latter was the only person who ever rid himself of him. He had energy and persistence to the very highest power, and he was so everlastingly good-natured that he was at last accepted just as one accepts, and at last cares for, a flavor of garlic in a salad.

Johnson at last forced him on The Club by intimating very significantly that until Boswell was elected nobody else would be, and it is lucky for us and for The Club, too, that Boswell became a member. He has immortalized it. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Garrick, Goldsmith and Burke and Gibbon would never have been known

to us as they are had it not been for the pen of James Boswell.

He possessed as no other man has ever possessed a genius for biography, and an exquisite power of drawing character. There were a half dozen or more biographies of Johnson written immediately after his death by persons who had known him intimately. Compare any of them with Boswell's work and it will be seen how immeasurably he surpassed them all. As Macaulay says: "Eclipse is first and the rest nowhere."

Posterity has laughed at Boswell, just as his contemporaries did, but it has also been grateful to him.

Carlyle dealt more kindly with him than any other writer has done, though there are a good many who are glad to be called Boswellians—not on his account, yet because of him.

He was much a child and a good deal of a fool, but he was also a genius, and we are glad he lived and was precisely the man he was. He was not a particularly admirable person, but he made the world better and wiser because he lived in it.

We cannot say this for everybody or even for some men of very supreme genius.

# MRS. THRALE,

## A CELEBRATED WOMAN.

(1741–1822.)

A FAMOUS member of that circle that "exchanged repartees under the rich peacock hangings of Mrs. Montagu" was Mrs. Thrale, more generally known in literary history as Mrs. Piozzi. She was one of the most distinguished of the blue-stockings, but we know her better through her association with Dr. Johnson than in any other way. For many years she ministered to his comfort and did all in her power to make life pleasant to him, often a most difficult task. Her house at Streatham became to him a second home, and there, during the last twenty years of his life, he passed some of his happiest days.

Readers of Boswell will remember the many passages concerning the "lively Mrs. Thrale," many of which are colored by Boswell's jealousy, for he could not endure that anyone should be

on more intimate terms with his hero than himself. He quarreled with her and disparaged her book, but, next to Boswell, she gives us the best account of Johnson that we have. Her "Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson" is now an English classic.

Hester Lynch Salisbury was born in Carnarvonshire in January, 1741. She was of good family and received a much better education than was usually given to women in that day. At twenty-two she married Henry Thrale, a rich London brewer and member of parliament, and two years later, in 1765, the Thrales formed the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson.

They resided at Streatham, a suburb of London, and also had a house in town, and they drew around them many of the most distinguished men and women of letters in London.

In company with the Thrales Johnson made a tour of Wales and also a visit to Paris, and frequently accompanied them to Bath, then the most fashionable watering-place in England.

Mr. Thrale died in 1781, leaving a large fortune to his widow and daughters. Johnson was one of the executors of his will, and Boswell tells an anecdote of him that occurred at the sale of the brewery. The old doctor was seen bustling about with inkhorn and pen, and when asked by

some bystander what he thought the property was worth replied: "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

In the "Anecdotes" Mrs. Thrale relates much that is interesting about the doctor. She notes his wit, wisdom, aptness at repartee, and facility in versification. One morning she said to him: "Nobody sends me any verses now, because I am five and thirty years old, and Stella was fed with them till forty-six."

Thereupon the doctor burst out:

Oft in danger, yet alive,
We are come to thirty-five;
Long may better years arrive,
Better years than thirty-five.
Could philosophers contrive
Life to stop at thirty-five,
Time his hours should never drive
O'er the bounds of thirty-five.
High to soar and deep to dive,
Nature gives at thirty-five.
Ladies, stock and tend your hive;
Trifle not at thirty-five;
For, howe'er we boast and strive,
Life declines at thirty-five.
He who ever hopes to thrive
Must begin by thirty-five,
And all who wisely wish to wive
Must look on Thrale at thirty-five.

"You may see," he said, "what it is to come to a dictionary maker for poetry. The rhymes run in alphabetical order exactly."

Mrs. Thrale, a rich and vivacious widow of forty, soon became a different person—from what she had been as wife and matron. Her marriage had not been one of love, although it had been happy enough, and it was not long before she fell in love with her daughters' music teacher, an Italian named Piozzi. He was an entirely reputable and respectable gentleman, but the affair greatly scandalized her friends and family and shocked and grieved Dr. Johnson. She was married in June, 1784, six months before his death.

She went abroad and made her home in Florence, where she became a member of the once celebrated literary coterie known as the Della Cruscans, a company of poetasters that Gifford went to the trouble of satirizing in "The Baviad" and "The Maeviad." Two lines are given to Mrs. Piozzi:

> See Thrale's gray widow, with a satchel roam,
> And bring in pomp laborious nothing home.

Mrs. Piozzi long survived the harsh things said about her. She was a bright, witty, and

attractive woman, and while she wrote much that is deservedly forgotten, her poem "The Three Warnings" still holds a place in all English anthologies, and her "Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson" is still read as one of the most enjoyable of books.

Her second husband dying, she returned to London, where she resided until her death.

When she was seventy-five she fell in love with an actor named Conway, and wrote him a number of ardent love letters with a view to marriage. Conway came to America shortly afterward, but not meeting with success on the stage, committed suicide. His effects were sold, and Mrs. Piozzi's letters were published in New York under the title of "Love Letters of Mrs. Piozzi, Written When She Was Eighty, to William Augustus Conway."

Mrs. Piozzi never lost her vivacity and good spirits and grew old gracefully. She contemplated the approach of death with composure and serenity. Tom Moore records in his diary under date of 1819, "Breakfasted with the Fitzgeralds. Took me to call on Mrs. Piozzi; a wonderful old lady; faces of other times seemed to crowd over her as she sat—the Johnsons, Reynolds, etc., etc. Though turned of eighty she has all

the quickness and intelligence of a gay young woman."

"Gay young woman" she was until the end of her life, and on her eightieth birthday gave a concert, ball, and supper to between six and seven hundred people. Her health was proposed and drank with three times three, and at two o'clock in the morning, when the dancing began, she led the dance. A year later she died, surrounded by her children and grandchildren. She had lived a long and happy life.

# MME. D'ARBLAY,

## HER DIARY AND LETTERS.

(1752–1840.)

AMONG books to be classed as favorites, "The Diary and Letters of Mme. D'Arblay"—holds a prominent place. It is one of the most interesting works in the language, and forms an admirable supplement to Boswell's Johnson and Mrs. Piozzi's "Anecdotes." It gives us a series of pictures of eighteenth century society in London, of life, manners, and customs, as they were when George III. was king and the American revolution in progress. Here we have portraits of Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke and David Garrick, Mr. Windham and James Boswell, Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Montagu, and a hundred others long known to fame. The author was one of the most acute of observers, and her journal and letters intended solely for the eyes of a very few friends contain unprejudiced

descriptions of and comments upon the prominent persons she met.

Frances Burney was born June 13, 1752. Her father was Charles Burney, the author of a "History of Music." He was a musician and fashionable teacher, and for many years his engagements were such that he could devote but little time to the education of his children. Two of his daughters were sent to a French convent, but Fanny, though dearly beloved by her father, seems to have received the least of his attention. One of her sisters taught her to write, and the rest of her education was obtained in her father's library, to which she had free access. As a girl she became acquainted with the works of Richardson and Sterne, of Fielding and Goldsmith, of Voltaire and the novels of Marivaux. Dr. Johnson was a warm friend of the family, and she frequently saw him, while many famous men were visitors at her father's house, drawn thither by Dr. Burney's distinction as a musician. The great singers and musicians of the time were frequently to be heard and seen in Dr. Burney's modest parlors, and although Fanny held herself in the background and did not mingle with the illustrious persons often assembled there, she had every opportunity to observe them.

From the time she had learned to write she was in the habit of scribbling stories, poems, and plays, but on the advice of her stepmother, who thought such things very unbecoming in a young lady and a sheer waste of time, she, on her sixteenth birthday, burned up the whole stock of fiction and resolved to write no more.

But her heroes and heroines had become too real to her to be easily driven away and continued to haunt her imagination. The heroine of one of her destroyed stories was a beautiful young woman, whom she named Caroline Evelyn, who had made a mismated and unhappy marriage. This heroine died, leaving an infant daughter, Evelina, whose fate became so real in Fanny's imagination that she could not desist from again taking up her pen to describe her adventures and fortunes. Thus the story grew and when it was completed Fanny confided her secret to her father and wished to publish it. He laughed good-humoredly, gave her permission to do as she pleased, and after some quiet negotiation a publisher was found willing to take the risk. In January, 1778, the novel appeared anonymously, under the name of "Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance Into the World," and soon attracted notice. Johnson read it and declared there were

passages in it that would do honor to Richardson. Burke sat up all night to finish it, and Sir Joshua Reynolds almost forgot his brush in his absorption in the story. When it became known that it was the work of a young girl of sixteen or eighteen the wonder grew greater, and Miss Burney became one of the literary celebrities. As a matter of fact, she was twenty-six when the novel was published, but it was wonderful enough even at that. Johnson petted her and called her his "little character monger." Mrs. Thrale entertained her at Streatham, and she became the center of the most brilliant literary circle of the day.

The diary begins with the publication of "Evelina," and relates the circumstances attending that event. There are some admirable reports of Dr. Johnson's conversation and descriptions of his endearing deportment, and gentleness with his "dear little Burney."

Fanny's next venture was a comedy entitled "The Witlings," which Sheridan, the manager of Drury Lane theater, asked her to write. It was first submitted, however, to her father and to Mr. Crisp, her lifelong friend and correspondent, and meeting with their disapproval was not produced.

She then wrote "Cecilia," her best novel, and

this was published in 1782. It was received with acclaim. She now became acquainted with the venerable Mrs. Delaney and often visited her home near Windsor Castle. This soon afterward led to an introduction to George III. and Queen Charlotte, who were in the habit of calling most informally on Mrs. Delaney.

In 1784 Dr. Johnson died, and the diary contains an affecting account of the last scenes. Other changes, particularly the marriage of Mrs. Thrale to Piozzi, the music teacher, threw Fanny into a different circle. She was invited to become a lady in waiting to the queen, and underwent five years of virtual slavery at the court. The journal contains an interesting description of the domestic life of the king and queen.

In 1793 Fanny married General D'Arblay, a French refugee, and in 1796 published her third novel, "Camilla," which is by no means equal to the others.

# HANNAH MORE.

(1745–1833.)

Dr. Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale: "Miss More has written a poem called 'The Bas Bleu' which is, in my opinion, a very great performance. It wanders about in manuscript and surely will soon find its way to Bath." At another time when the doctor was feeling more than ordinarily good-humored he told the delighted author that "he considered there was no name in poetry that might not be glad to own the work."

Time has hardly justified such glowing praise, but the poem is interesting as giving a picture of London literary society one hundred and twenty-five years ago.

The following is a quotation from it:

Long was society o'errun
By whist, that desolating Hun;
Long did quadrille despotic sit,
That Vandal of colloquial wit;
And conversation's setting light
Lay half obscured in Gothic night.

At length the mental shades decline,
Colloquial wit begins to shine;
Genius prevails, and conversation
Emerges into reformation.
The vanquished triple crown to you
Boscawen sage, bright Montagu,
Divided fell. Your cares in haste
Rescued the ravaged realms of taste;
And Lyttleton's accomplished name
And witty Pulteney shared the fame;
The men, not bound by pedant rules,
Nor ladies precieuses ridicules;
For polished Walpole showed the way
How wits may both be learned and gay;
And Carter taught the female train,
The deeply wise are never vain;
And she who Shakespeare's wrongs redressed
Proved that the brightest are the best.

This poem circulated in manuscript for several years before it was printed, and so famous did it become that it is said George III. requested the author to make a copy of it for him. After that it became a fashionable craze to possess a copy of "The Bas Bleu" in the author's handwriting.

Hannah More, was born at Bristol, England, in 1745 and died in 1833. In her youth she was a friend of Johnson, Burke, Garrick, and Horace Walpole, and in her age she watched over and was delighted with the genius of Macaulay. Her life extended through two great epochs of

our literature. She belonged to the Johnsonian period, and lived to see the new era of Byron and Shelley, of Jeffrey and Macaulay.

She was the fourth of five sisters, all sprightly, all well educated, and all school teachers in Bristol. Hannah was the brightest, and at seventeen wrote a play entitled "The Search After Happiness." It was intended only for school exhibitions, but it gave the young author quite a literary reputation. On the strength of it and with a letter of introduction to Miss Reynolds, the sister of Sir Joshua, Hannah and one of her sisters visited London. This was in 1772. Through the Reynoldses the sisters were introduced to Dr. Johnson, and they made a conquest of him. When he had heard their simple story and how the five sisters taught school for a livelihood, he burst out: "I love you both. I love you all five. I never was at Bristol. I will come on purpose to see you. I have spent a happy evening. I am glad I came. What five women live happily together! God bless you forever! You live lives to shame duchesses."

Nor was this all of Hannah's social successes. She was a favored guest at Mrs. Montagu's and soon became a favorite with all that brilliant set.

On her return to Bristol Hannah wrote a poem

entitled "Sir Eldred of the Bower," somewhat on the model of Dr. Percy's "Reliques," which were then all the rage. The poem was published and was well received, and when she returned to London the following season she was greeted as one of the muses. Johnson met her with a quotation from the poem—he had all the best stanzas by heart—and declared it was the best thing that had been written since Goldsmith died.

Hannah describes in one of her letters an amusing incident that occurred at the Garricks', with whom she had become intimate. Garrick took up her poem and read it aloud to her and Mrs. Garrick, giving it all the effect of his perfect elocution and acting. Hannah wrote: "I think I never was so ashamed in my life, but he read it so superlatively that I cried like a child. Only think what a scandalous thing to cry at one's own poetry! I could have beaten myself, for it looked as if I thought it very moving, which I can truly say is far from being the case. But the beauty of the jest lies in this: Mrs. Garrick twinkled as well as I, and made as many apologies for crying at her husband's reading as I did for crying at my own verses. She got out of the scrape by pretending that she was touched by the story, and I by saying the same thing of the reading. It

furnished us with a great laugh at the catastrophe, when it really would have been decent to have been a little sorrowful."

Her next production was a tragedy entitled "Percy," which Garrick brought out at Drury Lane in 1777 with most astonishing success, and it brought Miss More quite a considerable sum of money. But it was never played a second season. Another of her tragedies is "The Fatal Falsehood," which met with like success at its first presentment and then was heard of no more. In 1784 she lost her friend, Dr. Johnson, and from that time forward she devoted her pen to moral and religious subjects. Her "Sacred Dramas" are founded upon scriptural stories and went through many editions.

She wrote one novel, "Cœlebs in Search of a Wife," a sort of semi-religious story. It was translated into every European language, though Sydney Smith in the *Edinburgh Review* gave it but scant courtesy.

We get some pleasant pictures of the kindly maiden author—from youth to old age she was a most lovable woman—in the "Life of Macaulay." The Macaulays and Miss More were great friends, and she was the godmother of Hannah Macaulay, afterward Lady Trevelyan.

One day she called at the well-known home in Clapham and was met at the door by a bright little fellow four years old. He told her that his parents were not at home, but if she would be so good as to come in he would give her a glass of "old spirits," a proposition which greatly startled the good lady, who had never aspired beyond cowslip wine. When questioned as to what he knew about "old spirits," he could only say that "Robinson Crusoe often had some."

During the entire period of Macaulay's boyhood he corresponded with Miss More, and she made him many presents of books, which became the foundation of his library.

Her letters to him when he was but a child, if he ever was a child, are extremely interesting.

# MRS. BARBAULD.

(1743–1824.)

Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;
Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not good-night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me good-morning.

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON in his diary relates how when on a visit at Rydal Mount he repeated to Wordsworth this stanza on "Life," written by Mrs. Barbauld. Wordsworth at once memorized it and then said: "I am not in the habit of grudging people their good things, but I wish I had written those lines."

Mr. Robinson became acquainted with Mrs. Barbauld in 1805 when she was past sixty, and thus describes her: She bore the remains of great personal beauty. She had a brilliant complexion, light hair, blue eyes, a small, elegant

figure, and her manners were very agreeable, with something of the generation then departing. In the estimation of Wordsworth, she was the first of our literary women, and he was not bribed in his judgment by any especial congeniality of feeling, or by concurrence of speculative opinions.

The poet Rogers, sitting with Mme. D'Arblay when she was very old and but a few weeks before her death, asked her if she remembered those lines of Mrs. Barbauld on "Life." "Remember them!" she replied. "I repeat them to myself every night before I go to sleep."

Anna Laetitia Aikin was born in 1743 and received a fine education. At the age of twenty she married Mr. Barbauld, a Presbyterian clergyman. She had already published a volume of poems, and in conjunction with her brother, Dr. John Aikin, a volume of "Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose." In "The Table Talk of Samuel Rogers" there is an anecdote of Charles James Fox's meeting Dr. Aikin at a dinner party. "I am greatly pleased with your 'Miscellaneous Pieces,' Mr. Aikin," said Fox. Aikin bowed. "I particularly admire," continued Fox, "your essay 'Against Inconsistency in Our Expectations.'" "That," replied Aikin, "is my sister's." "I like much," returned Fox, "your essay on

'Monastic Institutions.'" "That," answered Aikin, "is also my sister's." Mr. Rogers adds: "Fox thought it best to say no more about the book."

Like the generality of writers of that period, particularly the younger writers, Miss Aikin was an imitator of Dr. Johnson's style, and there are paragraphs in her essays that sound like passages in "The Rambler." Johnson once said to Boswell: "The imitators of my style have not hit it. Miss Aikin has done it the best, for she has imitated the sentiments as well as the diction." On another occasion he remarked:

> Too much is expected from precocity, and too little performed. Miss Aikin was an instance of early cultivation, but in what did it terminate? In marrying a little Presbyterian parson, who keeps an infant boarding-school, so that all her employment now is "to suckle fools and chronicle small beer." She tells the children, "This is a cat," and "that is a dog, with four legs and a tail; see there, you are much better than a cat or a dog, for you can speak." If I had bestowed such an education on a daughter, and had discovered that she thought of marrying such a fellow, I would have sent her to the congress.

This was in 1775, when the American congress was protesting against that taxation which Johnson thought "no tyranny."

Miss Aikin could certainly have made a much

more brilliant match, for she was both beautiful and highly educated, but she accepted her lot in life with the utmost sweetness of temper. Her husband was of an irritable and nervous temperament, partly insane and morbidly jealous. After thirty-five years of much unhappiness he ended his own and her troubles by throwing himself into the river. Terrible as the blow was to her, she passed her remaining years in comfort, surrounded by troops of friends. Her chief vocation for many years was, as Dr. Johnson said, to teach school, and she compiled many school books which were long in use in England and America. "The English Reader" and "Enfield's Speaker" are probably yet remembered in the eastern and southern States. "Deaf as dogs' ears on Enfield's Speaker" is one of Hood's famous similes in the "Tale of a Trumpet."

Her literary activity continued up to old age. In 1810 she published an edition of the British novelists, with notes and comments. It includes the novels of Richardson, Fielding, Fanny Burney, Mrs. Sheridan, Mrs. Lennox, and many others whose books are now forgotten, and is still a standard edition.

She also took a great interest in the politics of the day, and being a Whig and a Liberal was bit-

terly hated by the Tories, and abused accordingly. In 1811 she published her longest poem, entitled "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven," in which there was a good deal of politics and strongly expressed opposition to the war against Napoleon. This greatly exasperated the Tories, and even the gentle Southey did not refrain from scurrilous personalities in his review of the poem in the *Quarterly*. He describes her as dashing down her shagreen spectacles and knitting needles and sallying forth to save a sinking country with a political pamphlet in verse. He advised her to stick to her lessons for children and leave the salvation of the country to those who know how to save it.

There are passages in the poem that have always been much admired, the following being one of them:

> Night, Gothic night, again may shade the plains
> Where power is seated and where science reigns;
> England, the seat of arts, be only known
> By the gray ruin and the moldering stone;
> That time may tear the garland from her brow,
> And Europe sit in dust, as Asia now.

Here we may see the germ of Macaulay's New Zealander standing upon "a broken arch of London bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's." In 1810 Mr. Robinson writes: "In the after-

noon I sat with Mrs. Barbauld, still in all the beauty of her fine taste, correct understanding, as well as pure integrity." From that time forward the entries concerning her are more frequent. He often visited her to play chess. In 1824 he writes: "Walked to Newington. Mrs. Barbauld was going out, but she stayed a short time with me. The old lady is much shrunk in appearance, and is declining in strength. She is but the shade of her former self, but a venerable shade. She is eighty-one years old, but she retains her cheerfulness, and seems not afraid of death. She has a serene hope and quiet faith—delightful qualities at all times, and in old age peculiarly enviable." A few months later she died. Her poem on "Life" was written when she was past seventy, and was the last of her works.

# ANN RADCLIFFE.

(1764–1822)

One can hardly say that Mrs. Ann Radcliffe is a forgotten novelist, for her name, and the name of her great novel, "The Mysteries of Udolpho," are familiar to everyone at all acquainted with modern English literature. Not that many people have read the story or know much if anything about the writer, but the name of the author and the story itself stand for a particular kind of fiction. So whenever any novel bordering on the mysterious and containing scenes with ghosts and trap doors and secret passages is published it is at once classed with novels emanating a century ago of which Mrs. Radcliffe's romances stand as the type.

George Colman, writing in that elder day of romance, contrasting the fiction of his time with that of Richardson and Fielding, said:

> A novel now is nothing more
> Than an old castle, and a creaking door,
> A distant hovel,

Clanking of chains, a gallery, a light,
Old armor, and a phantom all in white—
And that's a novel.

These were the properties that Mrs. Radcliffe made famous. She took for her model Walpole's "Castle of Otranto," but greatly bettered her instruction. "The Romance of the Forest" and "The Mysteries of Udolpho" are far superior as artistic works of fiction to Walpole's novel, for the apparently supernatural events in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels are finally explained by natural causes, and this is not so with Walpole. In this art she has no rival among English writers, not even Wilkie Collins. Two Americans surpass her, Edgar A. Poe and Charles Brockden Brown. The latter was her contemporary, but is now pretty well forgotten.

Mrs. Radcliffe's maiden name was Ann Ward, and she was born in 1764. At the age of twenty-three she married William Radcliffe, a student of law, who subsequently became the editor of a newspaper. Her first novel was published in 1789, but met with no success. Its name is hardly remembered. Her second book was called "A Sicilian Romance," which Sir Walter Scott says attracted much notice among the novel readers of the day and entitled Mrs. Radcliffe to

the praise of being the first to introduce into prose fiction a beautiful and fanciful tone of natural description and impressive narrative which had hitherto been exclusively applied to poetry. She is the first poetess of romantic fiction.

Her next story was "the Romance of the Forest," which appeared in 1791, and is still familiar to modern readers, at least by name. It has passed through many American as well as English editions, and is still to be found in all circulating libraries.

"The Mysteries of Udolpho" is the novel by which Mrs. Radcliffe is best known. It is a romance full of marvelous and thrilling adventure that sustains the interest of the reader to the end, although it is a very long,three-volume story. The heroine is Emily St. Aubert, who lives with her parents on the banks of the Garonne in the pleasant country of Gascony. Her mother dies and she and her father make a visit to Provence. On the way they meet Valancourt, who is also traveling. He is young and attractive, and the usual result follows. Next the father dies, but before his death he charges Emily to return home and burn, without examining them, certain papers that are to be found in a secret receptacle. Then Emily's aunt, Mme. Cheron, who is her guardian, appears

and first approves and then forbids Emily's marriage with Valancourt. The aunt is married to an Italian, Signor Montoni, who is the villain of the story. The scene next shifts to Venice, and Mrs. Radcliffe displays great power in describing the beauties of the Italian landscape and the majestic buildings of the Queen of the Adriatic. The Count Morani now appears as a suitor for Emily's hand, but she refuses him, against the wishes of her uncle, Montoni, who attempts to force her into the marriage. Suddenly Signor Montoni resolves to go to his castle in the Apennines, and they all accordingly pack up and make the journey.

The sun had just sunk below the top of the mountains whose long shadows stretched athwart the valley, but his sloping rays, shooting through an opening of the cliffs, touched with a yellow gleam the summits of the forest that hung upon the opposite steeps, and streamed in full splendor upon the towers and battlements of a castle that spread its extensive ramparts along the brow of a precipice above. The splendor of these illumined objects was heightened by the contrasted shade which involved the valley below.

"There," said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, "is Udolpho."

Then follow innumerable mysteries, and many plots are laid against Emily, but she avoids them all. At last she escapes in company with a French prisoner who has been held there, and

after meeting with shipwreck in the Mediterranean reaches her home in France. Other complications follow, but Emily and Valancourt are finally made happy. Mrs. Radcliffe was undoubtedly the high priestess in the temple of terror, but she made everything come out right in the end.

She wrote other novels, but they are now forgotten.

# JOHN HORNE TOOKE.

## A FAMOUS BOOK AND AUTHOR.

(1736-1812.)

THERE probably never was a book published the title of which was more deceptive than that which first appeared about the year 1775, called "Epea Ptereonta; or, The Diversions of Purley." Some people have supposed it to be a book of games, others a book of stories. Some have taken it to be a novel, others a volume of merry tales and practical jokes. He who, unaware of its real contents, opens it in search of amusement may not be disappointed, but he will not find the kind of diversion for which he was looking. It is nevertheless an entertaining and instructive book to students of the English language, and is a philosophical work on the etymology of certain words. The first part of the title is taken from the Iliad, "Winged Words"; the second part from the name of the place where the author at one time resided, Purley. The author was the celebrated

## JOHN HORNE TOOKE.

John Horne Tooke, whose name is far better known to readers familiar with English history in the latter part of the eighteenth century than is the title of his book.

The work is somewhat in discredit with modern philologists, but in its time it was considered a very ingenious discovery of the origin and etymology of certain particles in our language, such as conjunctions and prepositions.

Dr. Johnson, although he despised the author because of his politics, praised his work and said that if he were to make a new edition of his dictionary he would adopt some of Tooke's etymologies.

The origin of the work is as curious as the book itself, and in a letter to John Dunning, the celebrated lawyer, Mr. Tooke says in substance that it would never have been written in all probability "if I had not been made the miserable victim of two prepositions and a conjunction."

The particles in question were the conjunction "that" and the prepositions "of" and "concerning," and they occurred in an information against him for libel against the government. Tooke goes on to say:

But that the conjunction "that" and the prepositions "of" and "concerning," words which have hitherto been

held to have no meaning, should be made the abject instruments of my civil extinction (for such was the intention and such has been the consequence of my prosecution) appeared to me to make my exit from civil life as degrading as if I had been brained by a lady's fan. For mankind in general are not sufficiently aware that words without meaning, or of equivocal meaning, are the everlasting engines of fraud and injustice, and that the grim gribber of Westminster Hall is more fertile and a much more formidable source of imposture than the abracadabra of magicians.

A chapter is devoted to the word "that," and he shows that the conjunction "that" is the pronoun "that," which is itself the participle of a verb, and in like manner all the other mystical and hitherto unintelligible parts of speech are derived from the only two intelligible ones, the verb and the noun. He gives some examples:

I wish you to believe that I would not wilfully hurt a fly. Which is equivalent to saying I would not wilfully hurt a fly; I wish you to believe that assertion.

I affirm that gold is yellow, that is, I affirm that fact, or that proposition, viz., gold is yellow.

What do I mean when I use the conjunction "that"? Is it an anomaly, a class by itself, a word sealed against all inquisitive attempts? Is it enough to call it a copula, a bridge, a link, a word connecting sentences? That's its use, but what is its origin? And his answer was, It is the common pronoun, adjective, or participle "that," with the noun or thing understood.

He then goes on to apply the same method of

reasoning to other so-called particles of our speech, and reduces the whole language to verbs and nouns. But there is no space here for further quotations from this highly ingenious work.

In his lifetime the author was generally known as Parson Horne, he having adopted the name Tooke from a personal friend somewhat late in life. He was educated at Westminster and Eton schools and Cambridge University, his father being a well-to-do tradesman in the City of London. It was his ambition to become a lawyer, but in compliance with his father's wishes and much against his own he entered the Church, thus making a misstep in life from which he never fully recovered, for like Churchill, his contemporary, he was of too militant a disposition and too fond of politics to remain contented in a pulpit, while his fondness for gayety and high living was hardly in keeping with the decorum of the Church. Nevertheless, he did his best after a fashion for twelve years, and being a ready and capable speaker, became quite a popular preacher.

Finally, in 1777, at the age of forty-one, he cast aside his black gown, resigned his living and began the study of law.

Meantime he had taken a very active part in

the politics of the day, was a follower of "Wilkes and Liberty" and a supporter of the American colonists in their struggles with the mother country. He was a trenchant critic of the ministry, and this it was that finally brought him before Lord Mansfield in suits for seditious libel. From several of these he escaped, but he was finally convicted in the case mentioned above and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment and fined two hundred pounds.

But this did not daunt his spirit or silence his tongue, and after his release he continued his political activity, though perhaps with a little more caution.

He had been admitted to the Inner Temple, one of the Inns of Court, in 1777 to prosecute the study of law, but when he came to apply for admission to the bar in 1779 he was rejected for the reason that he had been a clergyman and was consequently disqualified for any other profession. The real reason, however, was that he was too radical in his politics.

He had formed the acquaintance of William Tooke, a very wealthy man who lived at Purley, a suburb of London in Surrey, and here he made his residence for a considerable period. It is from this place his book is named, though, in fact, none

of it was written there. As Mr. Tooke intended to make him one of his heirs he adopted the name and from this time on became known as John Horne Tooke.

His advocacy of liberal opinions continued without abatement after the beginning of the French revolution, and in 1794 he was arrested and tried for high treason. All lawyers know this celebrated case, for it was the occasion of one of Erskine's great and masterly speeches—a classic in the oratory of the bar. Tooke was triumphantly acquitted and became more noted than ever. He had already made several attempts to enter parliament as a member for Westminster, and he now tried it again, but without success. At last his friend Lord Camelford had him chosen for Old Sarum, one of the most famous of English rotten boroughs, whose some half a dozen tenants of Lord Camelford elected two members of parliament.

But his success was short-lived. Again his black gown, long cast aside, returned to plague him. A resolution was passed by parliament "that no person who either is or has been in priest's orders, or held any office in the Church, can possibly be a member of the House of Commons." Upon this Mr. Tooke was declared ineligible and deprived of his seat.

The stormy part of Horne Tooke's career substantially ended with his trial and acquittal for treason in 1794, though he continued to indulge his passion for political discussion. In 1799, he actively opposed the income tax, one of William Pitt's new taxes. He denounced it as "a hated impost, odious from every point of view;" but the ministry needed the money to carry on the war with France, so that the income tax became familiar to the English people. At first it was considered only to be a war measure.

Tooke made his home at Wimbledon, in Surrey, not far from London, and what with an annuity purchased for him by his friends, and several legacies he received, his later years were passed in ease and comfort, save as disease and age enfeebled him. He was a martyr to the gout, which he always claimed was the result of his twelve months' imprisonment on his conviction for libel. It was due, he said, to the bad claret his jailers had given him.

In his last years he was abstemious both as to drinking and eating, but in the middle period of his life, after he had laid aside his clergyman's gown, he was a tremendous drinker, both of wines and brandy, surpassing even Professor Porson himself. Porson frequently visited Horne Tooke at

Wimbledon, and their joint potations were very deep. In both their biographies anecdotes are told of their special drinking bouts.

James Boswell was another of his friends whom Tooke frequently drank under the table. It was a period of excessive drunkenness among all classes of English society, from the highest to the lowest. Professor Porson shortened his life and marred his career by it, and the early death of William Pitt at the age of forty-seven was due entirely to his immoderate indulgence in wine.

In his retirement Tooke drew around him a number of the foremost men of the day who delighted in his conversation and companionship, some of whom had once been his political and even personal enemies. Among them were Lord Thurlow, who as attorney-general had prosecuted and convicted him of seditious libel; Thomas Erskine, the great advocate who had defended him in the treason trial; Sir Francis Burdett, the father of Lady Burdett Coutts; Gilbert Wakefield, a well-known Greek scholar of that day; John Dunning, the famous lawyer, afterward Lord Ashburton; Sir Humphrey Davy; Thomas Paine; Dr. Samuel Parr, the great scholar; Fuseli, the painter; Samuel Rogers, and many others distinguished in the arts and literature. It is to

Rogers we owe the preservation of a great deal of the ephemeral table talk of Tooke, he having taken notes of it at the time.

Tooke was unrivaled as a conversationalist, versatile, shrewd and self-possessed. He was a scholar and a wit, and had the polished manners of a high-bred gentleman. He was as fascinating in his deportment as his conversation was spirited. He could say very provoking things with a nonchalance and gayety that took away the sting. He was a master of what the French call persiflage. He would plague Fuseli by asking him about the origin of the Teutonic dialects, and gravely inquire of Dr. Parr as to the meaning of the word "is." Porson was the only man of whom he stood in some degree of awe because of his capacious memory, and in their discussions on languages Tooke rarely came out ahead. As a philologist Tooke is entitled to great credit, for he "blazed the way." Before his time the etymology of our language was virtually unknown. Dr. Johnson knew but little about it. Tooke pointed out that we must go to the Gothic and the Anglo-Saxon for the origin of our tongue and for the primitive meaning of words. His book is now outworn and well-nigh forgotten, but it is not to be despised any more than the caravels of Co-

lumbus that carried the great navigator to the new world are to be despised.

Some specimens of his wit and wisdom are worth repeating:

No man can reason but from what he knows. Tom Paine knew but little, and is therefore only to be trusted within his own sphere of observation.

Reasoning is only addition and subtraction.

Read few books well. We forget names and dates, and reproach our memory. They are of little consequence. We feel our limbs enlarge and strengthen, yet cannot tell the dinner or dish that caused the alteration. Our minds improve, though we cannot name the author, and have forgotten the particulars.

A child is fluent because it has no wish to substitute one word for another.

I wish women would purr when they are pleased.

We are fond of a miracle; and if we cannot find one we make one. What is clear and natural we are apt to despise.

Ridicule is no mean test of truth. If a thing, to be made ridiculous must be distorted, then are we sure it is an object of respect. It is remarkable that by no writer, of any age or nation, was it ever attempted to make the Roman character ridiculous.

An affected man cannot be a moral man. The whole study of his life is to cheat you.

It is best to let children read what they like best till they have formed a taste for reading, and not to direct what books

they shall read. When young and long afterward, I read without method.

"Do as you would be done by," is a scoundrel and paltry precept. A generous man goes beyond it.

Prophecies are thrown about like grain—and some strike and take root. The rest are lost and forgotten.

"The law," said Judge Ashurt, "is open to all men, to the poor as well as the rich." To which Tooke replied, "So is the London Tavern, if you have the price of the entertainment."

The hand of the law is on the poor and its shadow on the rich.

Horne Tooke was a very notable instance of a round man passing his life in a square hole. He was utterly unfitted for the life of a clergyman, but would undoubtedly have risen to great distinction at the bar. His mind was legal, and his natural tastes, his combative spirit and his courage would have carried him far. He had fully mastered the principles of the common law and in the cases in which he was called upon to defend himself in court he conducted his own defense and argued his own case, though he had the assistance of council. He was beaten but once, and that was in the case of seditious libel, where he insisted that he had been made "the victim of two prepositions and a conjunction." He with-

stood Lord Mansfield with great courage. In his trial for treason he conducted the examination of nearly all the witnesses with great skill.

For more than a quarter of a century he was a power in England, feared and hated by the king and court, but applauded and encouraged by the common people. He promoted the cause of American independence and he had a great admiration for Thomas Jefferson, whom he met in Paris in 1786, when the latter was the American minister to France.

He suffered intensely in his last years from dropsy, but met death with resignation and repose.

# RICHARD PORSON,

## GREAT SCHOLAR AND CRITIC.

(1759–1808.)

NEXT to the story of a battle and of triumphs of eloquence, we love to read about feats of memory, of scholarship and of the acquisition of learning. The marvelous memories of such men as Macaulay and Dr. Johnson fascinate us, and we read of the vast stores of knowledge they were ever ready to pour forth from their teeming minds with wonder and delight. It seemed so easy to them, and yet how difficult to us! Dr. Johnson apparently held at instant command everything he had ever read or studied or observed, and some of Macaulay's displays were fairly appalling to his hearers, as, for instance, when he repeated the name of every senior wrangler graduated at Cambridge in thirty years, or where he went off at score and named in their order every archbishop of Canterbury that had ever held the primacy of England from the establishment of

the Church down to the time he spoke. He could repeat the whole of "Paradise Lost" and countless other works, and once declared that if it were lost, he could restore the whole of it from memory.

The history of English literature and scholarship contains another name, now perhaps not so well known, that is fully entitled to rank with that of Macaulay and Johnson in respect to both memory and general intellectual power.

Few names are better known to classical scholars and students than that of Richard Porson, but to the general reader he is not so well known, though well worthy of remembrance. He was one of the Titans of English scholarship, universally admitted to be the first Greek scholar in Europe, a reputation he holds to the present time.

Nor was this his only conspicuous merit. He was as profoundly acquainted with English literature as with Greek and Latin. He knew the New Testament, as we all ought to know it, by heart, and he had Shakespeare at his fingers' ends. He could repeat pages and pages of poetry, sermons and history, scene after scene from plays, and his capacious memory was stored with all kinds of learning, valuable and valueless alike. Nothing came amiss to that retentive faculty.

He would set a child right in his doggerel fables, or a learned professor in his classical dissertations. Whatever pleased his fancy remained in his memory, to be recalled at instant command whenever needed to amuse or instruct. He could recite Homer by the hour, and there were few passages in the classics the context of which he could not recollect when quoted and their position in any particular edition.

One day, calling on a friend who was reading "Thucydides," he was asked the meaning of a word. On hearing the word he at once repeated the passage. His friend asked him how he knew it was that passage. "Because," replied Porson, "the word only occurs twice in 'Thucydides,' once on the right hand page in the edition you are using and once on the left. I noticed on which side you looked, and accordingly knew to which passage you referred."

"Roderick Random" was one of his favorite books, and he could repeat it, as Macaulay could "Clarissa Harlowe," from beginning to end. And yet he was very modest about his powers of memory, saying anybody could do the same if he took the same trouble. "I have made myself what I am by intense labor; sometimes to impress a thing upon my memory I have read it a

dozen times and transcribed it six." This probably referred to his training in early life and to his memorizing difficult passages in the classics. In his maturity he needed but to read over a paper or pamphlet once or twice to be able to repeat it again off-hand.

The thing chiefly remembered about Porson in these days was his one terrible vice of drunkenness. In an age notorious for its drinking habits, when everybody high and low drank heavily and deeply, and few were ashamed, Porson surpassed them all, and was condemned for his excesses. Statesmen drank, and Pitt, Dundas and Sheridan thought nothing of appearing in the House of Commons flustered with wine. Clergymen drank, and Dr. Parr, almost as great a scholar as Porson himself, lost his temper and sometimes his wig as the decanters passed. Judges drank, and Lords Stowell and Eldon were celebrated as "six-bottle men." Noblemen drank, and the Duke of Norfolk often proclaimed that on such and such a day "by the blessing of God he would be drunk."

But the excesses of Porson in respect to alcoholic fluids were portentous and unparalleled. His thirst appears to have been unextinguishable. It was never appeased until he became incapable of bringing a glass to his mouth. John

Horne Tooke said of him that he believed Porson would rather drink ink than not drink at all. Rogers relates that he would not scruple to return to the dining-room after the company had left, pour into a tumbler what remained in the wineglasses and drink it. He drank a bottle of spirits of wine that Mrs. Hoppner kept for her lamp, declaring it to be the best of gin.

Byron, who was at Cambridge when Porson was Professor of Greek there, has left on record some terrible stories of Porson's excesses. These told terribly on his constitution and his appearance, but his mind never seems to have been affected. To the end of his days his mental powers were strong and vigorous and his memory perfect.

He lived for the most of his mature life in London, and his society was sought by many curious to become acquainted with so remarkable a scholar. Sir James Mackintosh, Samuel Rogers, Dr. Parr and other well-known entertainers often invited him, and he had the entrée to many fine houses. But his tastes were coarse, and he rather preferred to be the king of the company in a cider cellar or some other place of low resort than to be received as an equal in Holland House. He often said he would not be

made a spectacle, and on that ground refused many invitations. He was careless of his dress and appearance, and although in his later years he had income enough for all his wants he looked more like a drunken sot than an eminent scholar whose conversation was coveted by the most distinguished men of the time.

He was born December 25, 1759, and destined for his father's trade, that of a weaver. As a child he showed so remarkable an aptitude for learning that the village curate gave him lessons with his own sons, and afterward interested himself so much as to obtain the aid of some wealthy persons in sending him to Eton. His progress there was such as to justify these patrons in sending him to Cambridge, where he soon became famous for his scholarship. He edited a number of the classics, particularly four of the plays of Euripides. He became the most renowned of Greek critics, and his fame spread throughout Europe. One of the most famous of his books, "The Letters to Trivas," may still be read with interest by those who are fond of critical controversy on the authenticity of scriptural texts. By these letters Porson settled for all time the spuriousness of the passage in 1 John v. 7 concerning the three heavenly witnesses. Curiously

enough, the passage remains in our Bible still, though it is omitted in the revised version.

Porson died in London of apoplexy September 25, 1808, in his forty-ninth year. His remains are buried in the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, at the foot of the statue of Isaac Newton and near those of that other renowned Greek scholar, Richard Bentley.

# CHURCHILL.

## POET AND SATIRIST.

(1731–1764.)

In the Georgian period of our literary history no names are found more intimately associated than those of John Wilkes, Charles Churchill and William Hogarth. For years they were warm personal friends, and then they became bitter enemies.

Few poets have achieved a greater contemporary fame than Churchill. He was a satirist, feared as few poets have been, but his verses are now hopelessly forgotten. Twenty years after Churchill's death, Cowper wrote: "It is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in a century. Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name of poet. I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over, and the last time with more pleasure than the first." But no one reads him even once

now except as students. And yet it is in the pages of the satirist that we find a portrayal of the customs and manners of the people such as historians do not always succeed in giving, and for that reason, if for no other, Churchill's poems will always have a place in literature. Hogarth's pencil and Churchill's pen give us views of English life that we elsewhere search for in vain.

Churchill was born in 1731, and was educated at Westminster school, where he had for schoolfellows, William Cowper, Warren Hastings, Richard Cumberland and George Colman. Without respect to his fitness, he was intended for the church, as he says in "The Author":

> Born to the Church, and for gown decreed
> Ere it was known that he should learn to read.

Certainly no one ever entered holy orders with fewer qualifications than Charles Churchill. To add to his difficulties he contracted a clandestine marriage when he was eighteen, a misstep in life from which he never recovered. At twenty-one he was given a small curacy, the pitiful income of which he endeavored to eke out in various ways, without much success. After struggling in this way for a number of years, unhappy in his domestic life and dissipated in his habits, he went to

London, intending to follow literature as a profession. He offered several poems to the booksellers without success, and then in desperation published "The Rosciad" at his own expense. This is a satire on the actors of the day, all of whom, except Garrick and Quin, were unsparingly ridiculed.

The poem met with immense success and the satirized actors threatened the author with personal violence, but when they saw the man they changed their minds. In one of his poems Churchill describes his personal appearance as follows :

"Vast were his bones, his muscles twisted strong,
His face was short, but broader than 'twas long,
His arms were two twin oaks ; his legs so stout
That they might bear a mansion house about ;
Nor were they, look but at his body there,
Designed by fate a much less weight to bear."

His next poem was "The Apology," and was a reply to his critics, Smollett particularly receiving a tremendous castigation.

These poems brought him both reputation and money, his first success in life. He gave up his profession which he despised, and separated from his wife whom he hated, though he made adequate provision for her maintenance. He became a

man of fashion and a boon companion of Wilkes, then noted as one of the most dissolute men of the time. He was a member of parliament and a radical. When George III. succceded to the throne, Wilkes opposed the ministry of Lord Bute, and started a newspaper, *The North Briton*, that became famous for the audacity of its attacks on the king and the government. Churchill joined with Wilkes in writing for the new paper, and his powerful satires contributed greatly to its success.

When Wilkes was banished from England in 1764 Churchill followed him to France and died of a fever at Boulogne shortly after. He had only attained his thirty-fourth year.

Had Churchill taken as much pains to polish his lines as did Pope "The Rosciad" would be as immortal as "The Dunciad," and "The Author" as the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot." But he did not possess the necessary patience, and his poems have not lived except for the historian or the curious student. He was the scourge of bad men, himself not better than the very worst, but he has passed into oblivion with the most obscure of those he satirized.

# JOHN WILKES,

## SCHOLAR, WIT, AND PROFLIGATE.

(1720–1790.)

JOHN WILKES occupies so prominent a chapter in English history, and was so remarkable a personality, that it is small wonder biographies of him are still written. His long contest with George III. has enrolled him among the champions of English freedom, his scholarship entitles him to a place among the cultivated and the learned, while his wit, fine manners and profligacy gave him the reputation of being "the most agreeable rake that ever trod the rounds of indulgence." And all this he gained in spite of the most forbidding aspect that ever afflicted any human being. Hogarth has preserved for us in two of his cartoons the lineaments that even he could not exaggerate, while the best of Wilkes' portraits seem almost like caricatures. His forehead was low and narrow, his nose short and

lower, his upper lip long and projecting, his eyes sunken, with the most horrible squint. And yet the universal testimony is that no person, man or woman, ever came in contact with him without being speedily fascinated by his manners and conversation, forgetting all about his ugliness. Two ladies were talking of him and one remarked upon his squint. The other replied: "Squints! Well, if he does, it is not more than a man should squint." It is also said of him that give him half an hour's start and he would win the favor of any lady against the handsomest man in the kingdom.

Before he was of age Wilkes was persuaded by his father into a marriage with a woman who was ten or fifteen years older than himself, but was rich. Wilkes described it as a sacrifice to Plutus rather than to Venus. She was a rigid Methodist, and he a gay man of the world. Anyone could foretell the result of such a marriage. After a few years of misery she gave over to him all her property on his covenant to let her live in peace with her mother on a separate income of two hundred pounds a year. He next tried to get elected to parliament, and finally succeeded, after squandering all his money. He then went so far as to try to get the miserable pittance settled on his wife away from her, but the Court of King's

Bench protected her and warned Wilkes not to molest her.

His attitude toward his wife is the greatest stain on his character, and when it is understood that his conduct was well known, as well as that he was a rake and a scoffer at religion, a high priest in that infamous circle that held its orgies in Medmenham Abbey, the subsequent career of Wilkes seems marvelous.

His opportunity came when George III. succeeded to the throne and the Earl of Bute became prime minister. A more unpopular minister never undertook the government of Great Britain, and Wilkes started a paper called the *North Briton* the more effectively to carry on the political warfare against him. In this enterprise Churchill was his right-hand man, and some of Churchill's most venomous satires appeared in that paper.

Then began that political war between the king and his ministry on one side and Wilkes and the people on the other which raged for more than a decade, and which made Wilkes the champion of popular liberty and the rights of the people. On account of one of his attacks on the ministry in the *North Briton* Wilkes was arrested for libel, fined and imprisoned and expelled from the House

of Commons. He was re-elected by the people and again expelled and again elected. Large subscriptions of money were made to assist him. He was elected an alderman of the city, then sheriff of London, and finally lord mayor. He fought the contest out to the end and finally was victor.

Among those who took the side of the king Dr. Johnson and William Hogarth were the ablest. The latter had for some years lived on terms of intimacy with Wilkes and Churchill, and when it was announced that Hogarth was going to desert his old friends and enlist his pencil on the side of the ministry he was threatened by Wilkes with reprisal. The artist was unmoved, however, and shortly there appeared a caricature in which Pitt, Temple, Wilkes and Churchill are depicted as incendiaries bearing torches to destroy the temple of government, while Bute is shown as endeavoring to put out the fire. Thereupon the *North Briton* came out with a gross personal assault on the caricaturist.

The following year, when Wilkes was brought before the Court of King's Bench, Hogarth drew that famous caricature from which Wilkes will squint upon posterity for all time. He is represented as sitting on a chair, a grin on his face,

twirling the cap of liberty (a fool's cap) upon a stick.

Churchill replied in his "Epistle to William Hogarth," one of the most savage of his satires, and Hogarth rejoined with a print entitled "The Bruiser C. Churchill (once the reverend), in the character of a Russian Hercules regaling himself after having killed the monster, Caricatura, that so severely galled his virtuous friend, the heaven-born Wilkes." The poet is delineated as a bear with torn clerical ruffles, hugging a club and drinking porter.

After successive misfortunes, several duels and many persecutions Wilkes at last triumphed, and in the end became reconciled to all his enemies, even Dr. Johnson and George III.

Wilkes was a man of great amiability of character, but above all exhibited the profoundest affection for his daughter, the sole ray of sunshine in his unhappy marriage. He superintended her education, delighted in her company, and when absent wrote to her constantly. Their correspondence, which has been preserved, is highly interesting. It reminds one of the similar relationship between Aaron Burr and his daughter, one of the bright spots in Burr's career.

When Wilkes went to Geneva during his out-

lawry all the young men there were fond of his company as a remarkable person and man of wit. One day one of the young men took the liberty of saying to him: "Mr. Wilkes, may I ask you what gave you such a hatred of Lord Bute?" "I, a hatred of him?" returned Wilkes, "nobody could hate him less; I am sure he was always very civil to me; and for that matter, I protest, I thought him a very good minister." "You! You! thought him so." "Ay!! Why should not I?" "Good God! Why did you attack him so violently then?" "Why? Why because it was my game, to be sure. I wanted to be somebody and as matters stood I had not much chance of getting anything from government, so you know my business was to attack it."

From 1764 until 1779 Wilkes carried on his fight with the king, the people always sustaining him. In the latter year he was elected chamberlain of London, a position that had large emoluments and few duties, the latter being confined principally to the reception of distinguished visitors to the city, of those who had received the freedom of the city or of the guilds. From this time forward he was easy in his circumstances, and as a consequence the fighting spirit in him died

out. He was ready to make peace with all his enemies, and even his enemies were willing to make peace with him. As chamberlain of the city he had occasion at times to meet the ministry, and even royalty itself, and at last his reconciliation with George III, was brought about. In his interview with the king, when the latter asked him what had become of Sergeant Flynn, the lawyer who had been elected at one time to parliament with Wilkes, and by his influence, Wilkes replied in his most polished manner: "Ah! your majesty, he was always a Wilkite, which I never was."

The reconciliation with Dr. Johnson was brought about by Boswell, and forms one of the most entertaining chapters in Boswell's great book.

Edmund Burke declared that this negotiation of Boswell's surpassed everything in the history of the corps diplomatique.

Johnson and Wilkes remained on friendly terms and met several times afterwards, and Johnson often spoke of his former enemy with kindness.

He was certainly one of the most agreeable men that ever lived.

# GIBBON.

## (1737-1794.)

NEW editions of Gibbon's History still come from the press, so that the work must be bought, whatever may be said about its being read. It belongs to the class of books that "no gentleman's library should be without," though it is equally included in Charles Lamb's definition of "books which are no books." Walter Bagehot, who was a most catholic reader, stumbled somewhat at Gibbon, and put himself on record to the effect that "the way to reverence Gibbon, is not to read him, but to look at him from the outside, in the bookcase, and think how much there is within, what a course of events, what a muster roll of names, what a steady, solemn sound." It will be remembered that these were the interesting volumes selected by the ingenious Mr. Wegg for the entertainment of the Golden Dustman, and that when Silas was cross-examined as to his reading of the immortal works he was forced to

reply: "I haven't been, not to say right slap through him very lately, having been otherwise employed, Mr. Boffin." It is to be feared that most of us would have answered in the same way if the same queries were put to us. But some sort of acquaintance we must have with Gibbon, and the history must be dealt with by every student of history and literature. "No reader," says Emerson, "can spare Gibbon with his vast reading." Carlyle called "The History of the Decline and Fall" "the splendid bridge from the old world to the new," and the historian Freeman said: "Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read."

With such authority as this speaking to us, we must at least own these volumes, and then do as Bagehot advised—look at the backs of them as they stand prominently on the bookshelves and imagine what they contain, or else in stubborn mood take them down volume after volume, and persistently master them, a task not nearly so irksome as many suppose.

For it is the epic of history, in which is related the story of mighty men and of the rise and fall of nations and kingdoms and religions. Beginning with the splendid period of Trajan and the Antonines, in which is seen the culmination of the

glory of Rome, the reader is carried down the stream of time for fourteen hundred years. Here is related the atrocities of Commodus or of Heliogabalus, there the virtues of Pertinax, the wisdom of Justinian, the glory of Constantine, the conquests and defeats of the Roman legions, the division of the empire, and at last, after the flight of centuries, the fall of Constantinople, when the eastern throne of the imperial Cæsars was conquered by the Turks.

One of the most brilliant portions of the work is devoted to Mahomet and the rise of the Saracen Empire, another to the fall of Jerusalem. Take it altogether, it is an unequaled narrative, and Gibbon was well equipped for it, for in historical erudition he surpassed every writer of his time.

The history occupied him for twenty-four years. In his autobiography he says: "It was at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind." He was twenty-seven when he entered upon the colossal undertaking, and until it was completed he pursued his task with ever-increasing ardor.

The first volume appeared in 1776, the next two in 1781 and the last three in 1788. There have been few instances in our literary history of such untiring industry, and fewer still of so great appreciation and reward.

But great as the history is, it is not so great as a literary production as Gibbon's autobiography. This was begun shortly after the history was finished, and its opening sentence runs as follows:

> In the fifty-second year of my age, after the completion of an arduous and successful work, I now propose to employ some moments of my leisure in reviewing the simple transactions of a private and literary life. Truth, naked, unembellished truth, the first virtue of more serious history, must be the sole recommendation of this personal narrative. The style shall be simple and familiar; but style is the image of character, and the habits of correct writing may produce, without labor or design, the appearance of art and study. My own amusement is my motive and will be my reward, and if these sheets are communicated to some discreet and indulgent friends they will be secreted from the public eye till the author shall be removed beyond the reach of criticism or ridicule.

It is one of the three or four great autobiographies of the world and is a literary masterpiece. He wrote it six times before he was satisfied, and the six copies are still extant. He reveals himself with charming frankness, and yet not quite so offen-

sively as Rousseau. He tells of his conversion to Catholicism when at Oxford, and how his father sent him to Lausanne to be converted back to Protestantism. A scheme that only succeeded in expelling Catholicism from his mind, leaving him in that state of negation about all religion that continued to the end of his life.

While at Lausanne he fell in love with the village belle, the beautiful Mlle. Curchod, the pastor's daughter. But his passion was not strong enough to defy the will of his father, who looked upon such a marriage as a strange alliance and would not consent to it.

"After a painful struggle," says the lymphatic Gibbon, "I yielded to my fate; I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son."

It is pleasant to know that the beautiful girl was not wanting in suitors and that she soon afterward married a banker's clerk, who in time became M. Neckar, the renowned banker and financier under Louis XVI. Their daughter became the still more famous Mme. de Staël.

There is not a line of the autobiography that is not richly worth reading.

# RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN,

DRAMATIST, POLITICIAN, ORATOR.

(1751-1816)

"WHATEVER he has done or chosen to do has been, *par excellence*, the best of its kind. He has written the best comedy, the best opera, the best farce and the best address; and to crown all, delivered the very best oration ever conceived or heard in this country." So runs a passage in Byron's diary concerning Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and lavish as Byron was of his praise, where he praised at all, it scarcely exceeds the truth. As dramatist and orator, as politician and man of fashion, Sheridan was one of the most remarkable men of his time. Sheridan's plays have outlasted Congreve's on the stage, where they still hold a place. Where one person knows anything about "Love for Love" or "The Way

of the World," there are thousands who know "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal." One must seek Congreve in the library, but Sheridan's comedies, after the lapse of more than a century, still survive to amuse and delight audiences as different from those for which they were written as can possibly be imagined. Congreve's plays are the greater literature, but Sheridan's are better adapted to the stage and remain popular, no matter how much the fashion of society may change. They may not be so polished, so witty, or so epigrammatic, but they have enough and to spare of all these. They are pictures that never fade or lose their color because they portray precisely those phases of human nature with which we are most familiar and which are most common. They may be somewhat out of drawing here and there, but they are like the best caricatures, absolutely true to life.

Sheridan's creations are as immortal as any of Shakespeare's and we all know Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, Joseph Surface and Sir Fretful Plagiary, Sir Anthony Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop, Bob Acres and Sir Lucius O'Trigger, though we have never met them elsewhere than on the stage. But they live.

Sheridan wrote four plays, "The Rivals," "The School for Scandal." "The Duenna," and "The Critic," and, as Byron said of them, they are the best of their kind. They abound in wit and humor, and quotations from them form parts of our daily speech.

There is Mrs. Malaprop with her "nice derangement of epitaphs," who has long had her place among the immortals. She has had many imitators, the best of them perhaps being our own Mrs. Partington, but she has had no equals. Here are a few of her gems:

'Tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little aversion.

A progeny of learning.

He is the very pineapple of politeness.

As headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile.

No caparisons, miss, if you please. Caparisons don't become a young woman.

You are not like Cerebus, three gentlemen at once, are you?

Brilliant dialogue and sententious wit sparkle on every page of these plays and lighten up every scene. They go off like fireworks. The smart

sayings are like pistol shots, and you laugh so heartily and enjoy it all so much that you forget that all the characters are equally witty, whether they are fools or fops, serving men or matrons, young women or old. This is not nature—it is not Shakespeare—but it is great art. We are dazzled, we are charmed, and we applaud. No servant ever replied to his master as Fag replies to Captain Absolute: "I beg pardon, sir; I beg pardon, but with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie I always forge indorsements as well as the bill."

It is very witty and very laughable, but Launce could not have answered in that way, or Young Gobbo.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin in 1751. His grandfather had been a friend of Swift. His father, Thomas Sheridan, was an actor and elocutionist, of whom we hear occasionally in the pages of Boswell, and his mother, Frances Sheridan, was the first English woman novelist, the author of a number of romances and plays.

When Richard Brinsley was twelve his parents removed to England and he was sent to Harrow school, where he was rated an "impenetrable

dunce." At eighteen he left school and went to reside with his parents at Bath, then one of the most fashionable of English resorts. No youth ever entered upon life with worse prospects or with emptier pockets, and none ever succeeded more brilliantly. With no resources but his fascinating tongue and Irish wit he won fortune, place, and power, which he might easily have kept had he not been the most reckless of spendthrifts.

His first adventure was to win the heart of the greatest beauty and vocalist of the time, Miss Linley, carrying her off from ten rich and titled adorers, fighting a most desperate duel with one of them, Captain Matthews. She it was whom Macaulay describes as "the beautiful mother of a beautiful race." This was in 1772, when Sheridan was but twenty-one. Fanny Burney met them at Bath at this time and thus describes them: "Mr. Sheridan has a very fine figure, and a good, though I don't think, a handsome face. He is tall and very upright, and his appearance and address are at once manly and fashionable, without the smallest tincture of foppery or modish graces. In short, I like him vastly, and think him every way worthy of his beautiful companion. They are extremely happy in each

other; he evidently adores her, and she evidently idolizes him."

Having a wife and no money, Sheridan turned his attention to the stage, wrote "The Rivals," which was immediately successful, then bought Drury Lane theater, not having a penny to do it with and no security but his unrivaled tongue, and thenceforth for more than forty years seemed to have the world at his feet. He became one of the three or four most noted men in England, the companion on terms of equality with noblemen and princes.

In 1780 at the age of twenty-nine he entered parliament, and his career there was long and brilliant. One of his speeches delivered on the trial of Warren Hastings was the most eloquent ever heard in the House of Commons.

In 1792 his wife, whose loveliness had long been the theme of the world, "the connecting link between woman and angel," died. Other misfortunes came and debts began to accumulate. His theater was condemned, and it had to be rebuilt. But this he accomplished as easily as he had bought it in the first instance. Four years after the death of his wife he met a charming young lady, young enough to be his daughter. Dissipation marked his features; his nose was

red, his cheeks purple. He fell in love with her; she looked upon him as a monster of ugliness. He conversed with her and won her heart and hand. She became as devotedly attached to him as had been his first wife. Before the marriage the father of the young lady insisted that Sheridan should settle £15,000 on her. He raised the money as if by magic and deposited it with a banker. Up to nearly the close of his life he never entered upon any undertaking in which he did not succeed.

The theater was rebuilt, but that entailed more debt. Other losses followed, and then the theater burned down, overwhelming Sheridan in pecuniary ruin. In 1812 he lost his seat in parliament, so that he was no longer exempt from arrest for debt. Disaster followed disaster, his health gave way, the Prince of Wales neglected him, and his fine friends left him. His beautiful wife remained his devoted and sometimes his only attendant. At last the end came, and on the 7th of July, 1816, at the age of sixty-five, he died. Then the world that had forgotten him and left him in want and misery rushed to his funeral. Westminster Abbey alone could be his last resting-place, and there, with pageantry and ostentation, in the presence of great officers of state, of princes of

the blood royal and of the nobility of the kingdom, his dust was laid. Byron wrote a monody on his death, which concludes:

> While lives our sense
> Of pride in Merit's proud pre-eminence
> Long shall we seek his likeness, long in vain,
> And turn to all of him which may remain,
> Sighing that Nature formed but one such man,
> And broke the die—in molding Sheridan.

# GEORGE CRABBE.

(1754–1832.)

SEVENTY and eighty years ago everybody read Crabbe, but it is many years since he has been much quoted, and it is doubtful if there are many readers who know even the titles of his once celebrated poems.

And yet the poetry that compelled the admiration of Lord Thurlow, Dr. Johnson, and Edmund Burke; that received the favorable criticism of reviewers so dissimilar in tastes and standards as Francis Jeffrey, William Gifford, and Professor Wilson; that was praised equally by Byron and by Wordsworth, and sustained and soothed Charles James Fox and Sir Walter Scott on their dying beds must have been written by a man of more than ordinary genius and been esteemed as more than ordinary poetry.

Born in 1754, Crabbe died in 1832, the last exemplar of the poetic school of Dryden and

Pope. The authors of "The Rejected Addresses," who parodied him so exquisitely, called him "Pope in worsted stockings," but this was unjust. He adopted the style of Pope, just as Dr. Johnson did, because it was supposed to be the only great poetic style, and a poem in any other manner would have little chance of popular favor in the closing years of the eighteenth century. But he created a field of his own, and with a realistic power that has never been surpassed he described the ordinary life of the English middle and lower classes.

Crabbe connects the old school of poetry with the new. With one hand he reaches back to Pope and the Augustan age of Queen Anne, with the other he grasps the hand of Tennyson and is prophetic of the splendors of the Victorian age. In his youth he was the contemporary of Goldsmith and Johnson, and sat at the tables of Burke and Reynolds. A generation later he was the contemporary of Scott, Byron, Moore, Coleridge, Campbell, and Southey, breakfasted with Rogers, and dined at Holland House. Both in his youth and in his old age his poetry was the fashion and brought him honor and emolument. It has fallen to the lot of but few men to have lived on such terms with two literary circles so entirely different

in thought and feeling and separated from each other by so many years. The poems that pleased the first circle and won him its admiration and patronage were "The Library," "The Village," and "The Newspaper," published respectively in 1781, 1783, and 1785. "The Library" is a description of literature under the various heads of history, divinity, philosophy, law, poetry, and romance. "The Newspaper" is a clever satire on the newspapers of the day devoted to puffing favorites, and winds up with an exhortation to all young poets to leave poetry and turn to some more profitable trade. "The Village" is the best of the three, and describes the poet's native village and its inhabitants with all the realism of a Balzac or a Zola. Dr. Johnson called it "original, vigorous, and elegant." It shows in the most vivid colors language can express that the lot of the rustic poor is not happy, but is in general miserable and often degraded. That they are neither virtuous nor ignorant of crime, though there are at times examples of heroism among them. He shows the hardships that surround and crush them to the earth. Here is one passage:

Ye gentle souls who dream of rural ease,
Whom the smooth streams and smoother sonnets please;

Go! if the peaceful cot your praises snare,
Go look within and ask if peace be there;
If peace be his—that drooping, weary sire;
Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire;
Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand
Turns on the wretched hearth the expiring brand.

Crabbe was intended for the medical profession, but his education for it was extremely limited. His father was unable to send him to a university, so that all the classical knowledge he had was such as could be acquired at a country school, while his medical training was obtained in an apothecary shop. With this preparation he undertook to practice in his native village, Aldborough, in Suffolk, a village later made famous by Wilkie Collins in his novel "No Name."

To complicate the situation a little more, as well as to make it interesting Crabbe fell in love, wrote much poetry, became engaged, but having an income of nothing a year, the young woman very sensibly declined matrimony.

Crabbe thereupon determined to try London, just as Goldsmith had done before him, under circumstances quite as discouraging, and with an equipment very similar. He was in his twenty-sixth year, was possessed of three pounds in money, a case of medical instruments, and a box of clothing. He had, too, some poems he had written. He tried

his literary wares on the book publishers with no success, then sought the patronage of Lord North and Lord Shelburne without avail, and finally, when on the verge of starvation, addressed a letter to Edmund Burke, inclosing copies of "The Village" and "The Library," asking assistance in their publication. To the lasting honor of that great man, Burke sent for the young poet, gave him a home in his own house, criticised his poems, and encouraged him to revise them, introduced him to Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and in effect set him on the high-road to fame and fortune. Thurlow, the lord chancellor, became interested in him, made him a present of one hundred pounds, and, when Crabbe's patrons thought it advisable for him to give up the medical profession and take holy orders, Thurlow presented him to two small livings. Then the Duke of Rutland and his duchess took him up, made him chaplain at Belvoir, and gave him a small church preferment, on which he married his beloved Mira after eleven years' engagement. Other church preferments came to him in course, and from the time that Burke extended him a helping hand in 1781 until his death, in 1832, Crabbe never knew an hour of real want or distress. In all literary history there is no more fortunate life than his.

These poems published and fame and competence won, Crabbe's muse was silent for more than twenty years. He lived a domestic life of contentment and ease in the country, visiting London occasionally and keeping in touch with the times; writing something, but publishing nothing. At last, in 1807, appeared "The Parish Register," which, like "The Village," delineates rural life and character as it came under the poet's observation while officiating as a country clergyman. The poem is divided into three parts—baptisms, marriages, and burials—and describes the middling and lower ranks of rustic life as they appear before the village pastor in these several ways. The coloring is not so generally dark and somber as in "The Village," and the poem contains some few pictures of purity and happiness, but in the main it is a terrible representation of poverty, misery, and degradation. One of the most touching passages is the story of Phoebe Dawson, which is said to have been the last piece of poetry read to Charles James Fox in his dying hours. It describes the innocent and beautiful village maiden and her ardent lover, their betrothal and wedding, their married life of poverty and the devoted lover soon turning to a brutal husband—

If present, railing, till he saw her pained;
If absent, spending what their labors gained;
Till that fair form in want and sickness pined,
And hope and comfort fled that gentle mind.

Crabbe's later poems are "The Borough," "The Tales," and "Tales of the Hall." They each have striking and peculiar merits, and have been the favorites of many eminent men.

# WILLIAM COWPER.

(1731–1800.)

THE poems of Thomson, Gray and Collins were a revolt against the classical style of Pope. These poets returned to nature for their inspiration, and showed that there were nobler subjects for poetry than the vices and the follies of the human heart, and better expressions for them, than stinging sarcasms clothed in polished couplets. Nevertheless, Johnson's all-powerful dictum that the heroic couplet was the only form of verse suitable for elevated poetry, illustrated as it was by Goldsmith's fine poems, kept the public taste in bondage. It was not until a year after Johnson's death that the poem appeared which was to introduce a new era, and lead poetry out of the realm of words into that of the imagination and the emotions. This poem was "The Task," by William Cowper. After a century of epigrams and studied conceits, poetry again became life-like, and spoke from heart to heart.

It was not Cowper's first work. He had already written and published several poems in the classical style, on moral and religious themes, but they met with but little success. They exhibited vigor of thought and expression, and no small degree of poetic sensibility, but they were molded in a form of which the public was tired without knowing precisely why.

It was Lady Austen, one of the dearest of his friends and admirers, that first suggested to him to write a poem in blank verse, as being more flexible and better suited to the genius of the English language. He replied that he knew no subject. "Oh," replied she, "you can never be in want of a subject. You can write on any. Write upon this sofa." The idea pleased the poet, and he entitled the work "The Task."

> I sing the Sofa. I who lately sang
> Truth, Hope and Charity, and touched with awe
> The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand
> Escaped with pain from that adventurous flight,
> Now seek repose upon an humbler theme;
> The theme, though humble, yet august and proud
> The occasion—for the Fair commands the song.—

He goes on to tell of the time when the rude ancestors of the English sat upon the bare ground. Then invention began, and the three-legged stool was produced.

On such a stool immortal Alfred sat,

In time three legs became four, a back was devised, elbows were added, and the seat made more luxurious. Next followed in natural evolution the "soft settee," and finally the luxurious sofa.

So slow
The growth of what is excellent; so hard
To attain perfection in this nether world,
Thus first Necessity invented stools,
Convenience next suggested elbow chairs,
And Luxury the accomplish'd sofa last,

But the poet does not long concern himself with the appointed theme. He digresses whithersoever the inclination of his thought leads him, and then follows descriptions of nature full of charm and repose, reflections, opinions, confidence and stories. He thinks aloud, and tells of the ordinary affairs of life in a vocabulary rich and noble. The verses teem with his personal emotions, deep and genuine, and you feel, as you read them, that at last heartlessness, unreality and artifice have been banished from poetry, and that you are standing in the presence of nature and of man. The first book concludes with reflections on the advantages of country life.

God made the country, and man made the town,
What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts

That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound
And least be threatened in the fields and groves ?

The second book is entitled "The Timepiece," and opens with the well-known passage :

Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful and successful war,
Might never reach me more.

The general theme is the sorrows and trials of life inseparable from man's condition. We here perceive the melancholy cast of Cowper's mind, and the religious gloom that shrouded his whole life. The remaining books are more cheerful, and entitled "The Garden," "The Winter Evening," "The Winter Morning Walk," and "The Winter Walk at Noon." All have their beauties, but "The Winter Evening" has been the most admired, and is in the poet's happiest vein. It is evening in winter, and the postman arrives—

The herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist and frozen locks;
News from all nations lumbering at his back,
True to his charge, the close pack'd load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,

And having dropped the expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch—
Cold and yet cheerful: Messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some:
To him indifferent, whether grief or joy.

The important budget is received and all are eager to hear the news from the busy, noisy world without:

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

Then he opens the "folio of four pages," "map of busy life," and reads the contents—news, politics, advertisements, all—to his attentive hearers. It all seems commonplace enough, but the poet by his art, transfigures it, and out of the most ordinary material presents a gallery of splendid pictures. News from India causes him to see the dusky East in "her plumed and jeweled turban." The mention of politics causes him to see the statesman who climbs and pants and grasps the seals of office, only to lose them to some artful demagogue, "who wins them but to lose them in his turn." Thus from the loopholes of

retreat he peeps out at the world, sees the stir of the great Babel, but does not feel the crowd, and surveys at ease the globe and its concerns.

Cowper was a plant that flowered late, being in his fifty-fifth year when this poem was published.

He was born in 1731 and was the oldest son of an English clergyman. His grand-uncle was Earl Cowper, keeper of the great seal and lord high chancellor under Queen Anne and George I. His grandfather was Spencer Cowper, whose trial for the murder of a pretty Quakeress forms one of the striking episodes in Macaulay's history. He was acquitted and subsequently became a judge of eminence.

William was educated at Westminster school, where Warren Hastings, Charles Churchill, and others who afterwards became eminent were his fellow students. He was a delicate, timid boy, of exquisite sensibility and passionate tenderness. The taint of insanity was upon him, and he grew into a shy and timorous man. He was destined for the profession of law, and was a student in the same solicitor's office with Edward Thurlow, afterwards Lord Chancellor of England. Between these young men of such widely contrasted temperaments a warm friendship arose which lasted through life.

Cowper was in due time admitted to the bar, but he never practiced. He shrank from contact with men. A clerkship in the House of Lords was bestowed upon him, but the mere thought of reading the titles of the bills, drove him to the verge of insanity. He was given a more subordinate position, but it was necessary for him to stand an examination by a committee. He endeavored to face the ordeal, but the nervous strain was too great, his mind gave way, and he attempted suicide. He was at this time in his thirty-second year. The next two years he passed in the seclusion of an asylum, and his health and mind were restored. He then fell into a state of religious depression and supposed that he had committed the unpardonable sin. From this condition he gradually emerged and became assured of the forgiveness of God and of his salvation.

He now retired to the country and found in the companionship of the Reverend Mr. Unwin and his wife that sympathy and friendship which alone made life endurable to him. He entered their hospitable doors in 1765, and henceforth knew no other home. His income was small, but it sufficed for his moderate needs, and later, when success as a poet came to him and a pension of £300 was bestowed upon him, his means

were larger than his wants. Mr. Unwin died in 1767, and Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, the Mary of his poems, removed to Olney, attracted by the fame of the celebrated John Newton. There Cowper engaged in religious and charitable work, and wrote many of the hymns that are still favorites in all the churches. Clouds came over his mind from time to time, yet so far as his malady admitted, these years were passed in happiness. In 1781 he formed the acquaintance of Lady Austen, a woman of loveliness and accomplishments, and who added much to his happiness. She was a widow, and soon became on very intimate terms with the little household at Olney.

She it was that first related to Cowper the story of John Gilpin, that she had become familiar with in the nursery, and which the poet gave to the world in the immortal ballad. For reasons never known, but prompted, doubtless, by the jealousy of Mrs. Unwin, the poet was, after a few years of intimacy, obliged to sunder his friendship with Lady Austen. "The Task" was published in 1785, and soon afterward Cowper commenced his translation of Homer, which was successfully brought to a conclusion in 1791.

His malady now increased, aggravated by the mortal illness of Mrs. Unwin. In 1794 he

became irrecoverably insane. He lingered until April 15, 1800, when he died.

Through his whole life he was an affectionate and lovable person, full of that exquisite sensibility that shrinks from all contact with the world. Full of freedom and innocent raillery, with an imagination at once natural and charming, he was one of those persons to whom women love to devote themselves with maternal tenderness.

The world's temperature was too severe for him, and he was like an exotic transplanted from the tropics to the north.

But however unhappy his life, he wrote much that will always have a permanent place in English literature.

# ROBERT BURNS.

(1759–1796.)

"THE Task" was published in 1785. It disclosed to the world that the commonest things could be made poetic, if but the poetic eye could be brought to see them, that in a sofa, a tea-urn, a kitchen garden, a rumbling cart, or a peasant girl, there were beauties which, to the common mind, are hidden and unknown until the true poet reveals them. That all around us we may find the objects of poetry if we only bring to them the eyes to see with.

It was the most prosaic age England had known since the revival of letters, but it began to arouse. Nature never works by halves. When something is to be done, she provides ample, and more than ample, means for its performance. And so it happened that the year after "The Task" appeared, there was published in an obscure village in Scotland a small volume of poems, among which were "The Twa Dogs," "The Holy Fair," "Halloween," "The Cottar's

Saturday Night," "Man Was Made to Mourn," "To a Mountain Daisy," and some thirty pieces on similar subjects. They were the work of a Scotch peasant, and completed the revolution that Cowper had begun. They are of a far higher order of poetry than anything Cowper has written, and time has pronounced them imperishable. The chains that bound genius to form were at last shattered, never again to be welded anew. The mind, too, revolted, and manhood asserted itself. It was the seething time of nations, when liberty burst over the bounds of established order and made new channels, which ever since have borne on their bosoms freedom and progress for humanity. To this the timorous Cowper in part contributed, but the fearless and aspiring Burns much more. He looked upon the world around him, and upon man, and he saw that the world was fair and goodly, and that equality was the birthright of man.

A prince can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke and a' that ;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that ;
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that.

## ROBERT BURNS.

Never was genius united to more misery than in the case of Burns. He was born January 25, 1759, in a clay cottage built by his father, who was a poor farmer of Ayrshire. One end of the cottage fell in a few days after his birth, and in the midst of the storm the mother and child were obliged to seek refuge in the house of a neighbor. Poverty was upon the family, and it is not easy for arms, however willing and industrious, to compel a living from the ungenerous soil of Scotland. High rents absorbed the best of the profits, and the extremest parsimony was necessary to keep the family from starvation. Rare indeed was it for Robert Burns, in his boyhood, to have a taste of meat. Such education as he could acquire in a local school, and his father could give him, he obtained, but he went bareheaded and barefooted until his fifteenth year, at which time he became the principal laborer on the farm. He worked like a galley slave chained to the oar. His shoulders were bent, melancholy took possession of his mind, and his anguish was almost greater than he could bear. The father grew old, his tall figure was bent with care and grief and toil, and he was only saved from imprisonment for debt by the kindly hand of consumption which stepped in and carried him off. With the pittance saved

from the wreck, Robert and his brother took another farm, only to encounter renewed troubles. One year it was bad seed and another it was a late harvest that brought ruin to their door. Meanwhile his genius commenced to sing, and as he followed the plow or wielded the sickle, or studied by night, his mind teemed with new thoughts and aspirations, and the poet in him asserted itself. He had the consciousness of genius, and as he afterwards said: "Unknown as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an opinion of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in my favor." At every step of his rise, what a contest he had, and how class distinction against which he was so rebellious kept him down! His poetry is full of these natural outbursts against the State, the Church and the fixed forms of society. He knew and felt that "The rank is but the guinea's stamp, the man's the gowd for a' that," and that a peasant was as good as a lord.

See yonder poor o'erlabored wight,
  So abject, mean and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
  To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
  The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful though a weeping wife
  And helpless offspring mourn.

And so he worked and wrought to win from the unwilling soil a mere livelihood, poesy raging within him all the while, up to his twenty-seventh year. Then he collected the verses into a little volume and had them published at the provincial press of Kilmarnock. They were received with wonder and delight by the poet's neighbors and friends. Here were poems written in a homely phraseology and all understood, on topics with which all were familiar. The imagery and sentiments were such as all men feel, though only he who possesses the magical gift of poetry can express them. Every one, young and old, grave and gay, learned and unlearned, who picked up the volume were alike transported. The poet's fame rapidly spread, and soon a few copies of the poems reached Edinburgh. There they were received with surprise and wonder and the village admiration was more than re-echoed back from the stately mansions of the Scotch Capital. The poet was invited to the great city, the Mecca of all his hopes and aspirations. There he was feasted, caressed and flattered, by all. The best society opened its doors and grand dames vied with each other in patronizing the rustic poet. For several months he was the hero of the hour, the boast of Scotland. A new edition of his

poems was published which brought him something like £700. The temptations of the metropolis were also enticing to him, and his associations were not only with the wise and the learned. His democratic and independent nature resented the pretentiousness and hollowness of the fashionable society of which he was at first the pet, and it in turn became disgusted with the outspoken frankness and plebeianism of the poet, and so after one winter, they parted. Burns with the money he had gained took a new farm, and thither he brought Jean Armour, his love, and now his wife. He was also appointed as exciseman, and for a year or two longer he struggled with poverty and the unwilling soil. One happy year he passed with his wife and growing family, but the constant struggle was too much for him. He had never been prudent, and after his return from Edinburgh was less so than ever. He began to feel keenly his lack of power to obtain that round of pleasure which he had once enjoyed, but the means were lacking. He indulged in many excesses, he lost all self-control, and worn out in mind and body he died in July, 1796, at the age of thirty-seven. Then all his faults were forgotten and only his genius remembered. He was followed to the grave by ten thousand people of all classes and

rank, many of whom had come great distances to do honor to the poet.

His was indeed a sad life, as must always be so when genius is allied with poverty and improvidence. His life was a tragedy and one of the deepest. His irresponsible soul struggled upward to the light, but it was ever dragged downward.

In all his thirty-seven years few gleams of sunshine lightened his pathway. Think of the darksome drudgery of his childhood, his melancholy youth, his depressed and defeated manhood, and then of his wonderful genius, whose strains have uplifted the world and made men better and happier everywhere, and pass, if you can, judgment upon the ill-starred Burns! We pity and we love him, and his works will never pass away from the memory of men. With Shakespeare and Milton, and with the great poets of all time, his name is forever enshrined. He was a master of the human heart, a poet of the people, and we may return again and again to the crystal fountain he opened, and drink there and be refreshed.

# WILLIAM GODWIN.

## (1756-1836.)

A FAMILIAR name in the literary history of the last part of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth is that of William Godwin. He wrote the most remarkable political treatise of his time, and the most sensational novel, but it is doubtful if any one now reads the "Enquiry Concerning Political Justice," or even "Caleb Williams," though the latter still finds publishers and must have some readers. But when they first appeared they were the events of the time and challenged universal attention.

Godwin was the friend of Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Wordsworth, Horne Tooke and Jeremy Bentham; he was the father-in-law of Shelley and the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft, whose history is so pathetic. Yet his name is now but the merest shade. Indeed that was the case before he died, and Hazlitt wrote of him: "Mr. Godwin's person is not known; he is not pointed

out on the street; his conversation is not courted; his opinions are not asked, but the author of 'Political Justice' and 'Caleb Williams' can never die; his name is an abstraction in letters; his works are standard in the history of intellect. He is thought of now like any eminent writer one hundred and fifty years ago, or just as he will be one hundred and fifty years hence."

Born in 1756, the son of a dissenting clergyman, Godwin was brought up in the strictest tenets of Calvinism. He received a fair education and when twenty-three or four years of age, after preaching for a time, went to London to pursue a literary career. He was of a philosophic temper, entirely unimpassioned, and his investigating mind soon caused him to say farewell to Calvinism. He went to the other extreme, in fact, and became a free-thinker. He wrote for the reviews and for the *Annual Register*, and published a couple of novels, now completely forgotten. He was a liberal in political belief and became greatly interested in the French revolution as it progressed after 1789. During this time he was writing his philosophic treatise on "Political Justice," and in 1793, at the very height of the "Reign of Terror" it appeared. It was full of thoughts concerning the rights of man that were new then,

but which, owing to that book, are now trite and commonplace. Godwin's political speculations were so daring that the author was in serious danger of prosecution for sedition. The question was considered at a cabinet council, but when it was ascertained that the book was sold at a very high price, William Pitt, the Prime Minister, observed that "a three-guinea book could never do much harm among those who had not three shillings to spare," and the thought of prosecution was abandoned.

While there is much profound truth in "Political Justice," there is also much that is dreamy and impracticable. Like many reformers, Godwin carried his ideas to their logical conclusion without respect to the imperfect character of man. His philosophy was to elevate mankind and he advocated a form of socialism which would, if it could be brought about, establish the millennium. He discusses the social relations of men and women, and thought that marriage was objectionable because its ideal could not be realized. Men and women should not promise what could not be performed, and as no two human beings could agree together for any length of time, they should be permitted to separate whenever the state of disagreement was reached. Godwin did not at-

tempt to carry into practical effect any of these extreme theories and afterward modified his ideas on the subject.

Portions of his treatise, however, found popular acceptance and proved an immense factor in the growth of popular liberty. It gave cohesion to those notions of popular rights that had long been in the minds of men, but which hitherto had found no adequate expression. It made a great sensation and elicited much discussion. By one party he was regarded as an inspired teacher and by the other as a revolutionary atheist. He was neither, but only an unimpassioned philosopher.

In 1794 he published his first successful novel, "Caleb Williams," a story of great power, original and striking in plot and development, but unrelieved by a single passage of humor or of love.

The novel was dramatized under the name of "The Iron Chest," by George Colman, and met with as great success upon the stage as it did with the reading public.

Godwin's second successful novel was "St. Leon ; a Tale of the Sixteenth Century." The descriptions of St. Leon's married life and of his wife Marguerite, drawn from the character

of Mary Wollstonecraft, and the portrait of Charles, the noble and self-sacrificing son of St. Leon, are among the finest passages of English fiction. The novel, however, is very long, and at times tedious. It is not equal to "Caleb Williams."

In the spring of 1797 Godwin married Mary Wollstonecraft. Hitherto her life had been one of struggle and privation. She was at first a teacher and then became a writer. When the French revolution began she was in Paris, where she had gone to perfect her studies. War with England following she was unable to return.

In Paris she met Gilbert Imlay, an American, with whom she fell in love. The marriage ceremony having been abolished by the revolutionists, Imlay and Mary lived together. He acknowledged her as his wife and addressed her as such, but he in the end proved unworthy and after a few years deserted her and her infant daughter. She finally returned to England and in a moment of sudden grief attempted suicide, but was rescued. She is the author of several books, the most famous of which is "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." Its daring theories and extraordinary plainness of speech brought upon her undeserved accusations of immorality. The book,

like Godwin's "Political Justice," marks an epoch in the emancipation of woman. The author did not attack the institution of marriage, nor assail religion, but her book is a plea for equality in education and before the law. The world was aghast at her boldness, but there is not a plea she made that has not at this day been fully accomplished. She was one of the benefactors of her sex.

Her life with Godwin was the happiest she had ever known, but it was sadly brief. In August, 1797, her daughter Mary was born, and then she died. She is said to have been one of the most charming of women, and her praises have been spoken by all her contemporaries. Years after her death Southey said: "I saw her three or four times when she was Mrs. Godwin, and never saw a woman who would have been better fitted to do honor to her sex, if she had not fallen on evil times and into evil hands. But it is hardly possible for any one to conceive what those times were who has not lived in them."

All that he wrote, save the two or three books I have mentioned, is now utterly forgotten.

# WILLIAM BECKFORD.

(1759–1844.)

One of the unique books in English literature not easily forgotten when once read is the oriental romance of the "History of the Caliph Vathek," by William Beckford.

It is probably not very much read in these days and perhaps not very well-known. It belongs to a class of literature not uncommon in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but very uncommon in later years, which dealt with the supernatural and the grotesque, and in its style it is quite unequaled, unless comparison be made with certain of the "Arabian Nights'" stories or with Dante's "Inferno."

Beckford was but twenty-three when he wrote it. As the work of any young man it would be marvelous, but when one remembers that it was written by a youth possessed of boundless wealth, who knew little or nothing of the dissipations of life and was by no means satiated with its pleasures the marvel becomes a miracle.

## WILLIAM BECKFORD.

William Beckford was the son of that William Beckford who was thrice Lord Mayor of London, and is famous in the annals of the city for having defied George III. His speech as Lord Mayor may still be read on the pedestal of his statue that stands in the Guildhall of London.

The author of "Vathek" was born September. 29, 1759, and was carefully educated by private tutors. When he was seventeen he had acquired an accurate knowledge of Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Persian, and Arabic. Lord Chatham, who had been the lifelong friend of his father, encouraged him to enter public life, but for this he had little or no inclination, though he afterward sat in parliament for many years. He was the warm friend and supporter of William Pitt, Chatham's favorite son, but he never sought parliamentary distinction.

When he was twenty-one, his father being dead, he inherited an enormous fortune and was the richest man in the England of his day. He traveled through Europe with the magnificence of royalty, but he never surrendered his love of letters and of books for dissipation.

His letters descriptive of his travels are among the best in our literature. "Vathek" was written in French, at a single sitting, lasting three

days and two nights. He himself did not translate it, but it was published in English in 1784.

It purports to be the history of the Caliph Vathek, the grandson of the renowned Haroun Al Raschid, who succeeded to the throne when still a youth, and from his talents his subjects were led to hope for a long and happy reign.

Vathek, however, had no ambition but to indulge his own pleasure and appetites, plunging into all manner of excesses. His favorite wife was Nouronihar, an incarnation of beauty and of evil magnificence, and under her inspiration and that of his mother, Carathis, he seeks to penetrate the secrets of the future. He sought to build a tower to heaven, and thus incurred the wrath of Mohammed. He invoked the powers of evil, and Giaour appears, who promises him omnipotence if he will follow him to the realm of Eblis, the archfiend of Mohammedan theology.

It is the description of this journey that forms the chief part of the tale. The good genii, sent by Mohammed, are constantly struggling to reclaim Vathek, but their efforts are thwarted by Nouronihar and Carathis and powers of evil to lead Vathek onward to his doom. It is the old, old story of the powers of good and evil contending for the soul of man.

But it is written in glowing diction, and with intense realism. The great hall of Eblis, the seat of hell, is magnificently described, and there Vathek and his companions are presented to Eblis. They visit Soliman Ben Daoud (King Solomon), and for a brief moment they think they are to enjoy all the power that has been promised them, and then they are condemned to punishment by an awful and irrevocable decree. Their hearts burst into flame, and hope, the precious gift of heaven, abandons them and they are swept away "into the multitude and wander in an eternity of unabating anguish."

Such is the merest outline of this oriental creation of a youthful Englishman.

In 1783 Beckford married Lady Margaret Gordon, and took up his residence in Switzerland. She lived but three years after the marriage, leaving two daughters, the younger afterward becoming the Duchess of Hamilton.

He never married again. He now built a splendid residence near Lisbon, where he lived until 1796, when he deserted it and returned to England. In "Childe Harold" there are the following lines descriptive of Beckford's palace in Portugal:

**There thou, too, Vathek, England's wealthiest son,**
**Once formed thy paradise, as not aware**
**When wanton wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,**
**Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun.**

Although his father had left him a princely residence at Fonthill, Beckford erected another which he named Fonthill Abbey, which for magnificence and splendor rivaled the magic palaces of the Arabian Nights. Here he gave for a time vast entertainments in which no money was spared to gratify the most luxurious tastes.

Then suddenly he became a recluse and shut himself up in his splendid palace, seeing only a few chosen dependents. For years he lived alone, and terrible stories were told of the orgies at Fonthill Abbey. Many of them still survive, but they were without foundation. He lived alone but not unhappily, with his books and pictures. But his reckless prodigality at last had impaired his fortune and Fonthill Abbey with its treasures had to be sold in 1824.

Beckford retired to Bath, where he erected another fine mansion, and again surrounded himself with books and pictures. There he lived in seclusion for the remaining years of his life. He died in 1844 in his eighty-fifth year.

# WALTER SCOTT.

(1771–1832)

COWPER and Burns belonged to the eighteenth century. They were born in it and died in it. But a race of poets followed that carried forward the work they had so auspiciously begun, and made the nineteenth century more renowned for its literature than any other epoch since the days of Elizabeth. It was Walter Scott, belonging equally to both centuries, who appeared at the opportune moment and added the one touch of romanticism needed to lighten the realism of the two older poets.

Like Cowper, Scott was bred to the law, but his liking for his profession was but little more than Cowper's, though not due to the same cause, and he escaped from it by accepting the appointment of deputy sheriff of Selkirkshire.

From childhood his passion had been for the minstrelsy of the Scottish border, and as the years passed his capacious memory became stored with every sort of ballad and legend of the

olden time. Nor was his fancy for this kind of poetry confined to his own language. He early became fascinated with the German ballads, and his first attempt at versification was a translation of Burger's "Leonore." His study of the German ballads led him to think that he might do for ancient border stories what Goethe had done for the legends of the Rhine. He accordingly prepared a volume entitled: "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," which, with many old ballads never before published, included a number of imitations of that kind of verse from his own hand. It met with a good degree of success, and his boat was launched upon the sea of literature. The book appeared in 1802, when Scott was in his thirty-first year. He had married in 1797 Miss Charlotte Margaret Carpenter, a lady of French parentage, with whom he lived happily for the ensuing thirty years. He first resided in a cottage at Lasswade, next at Ashestiel, a beautiful spot on the Tweed, and next at renowned Abbotsford, which has been a Mecca for literary pilgrims from his day to our own.

"The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" was received with great favor. It established Scott's reputation as a poet, but its publication was the

beginning of that business connection with the Ballantynes that ended in so much gloom. Scott became a secret partner in the printing-business, having one-third interest in the concern.

Scott's fondness for old ballads and border legends was known to a large circle of friends and acquaintances, among whom was the Countess of Dalkeith, who related to him the legend of the tricksy goblin, Gilpin Horner, and asked him to write a poem upon it. The result was, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." This poem appeared in 1805 and was received by the world with a tumult of applause. Its striking measure, its novelty of scene and character and its romance attracted universal attention, and thousands of copies were sold before the public demand was satisfied. No one can read the story of the wandering minstrel and not retain in remembrance much of the brilliant description and picturesque scenery.

The next work was "Marmion," which was published in 1808, and raised Scott's reputation still higher, for it is his greatest poem. Its patriotic feeling, its love of daring, its swiftness of movement, its description of the pomp and circumstance of war, its picturesqueness and beauty of color challenged and won universal

admiration. The measure clung to the memory and came most trippingly from the tongue. "I am sensible," says Scott in his journal, "that if there be anything good about my poetry, or purpose either, it is a hurried frankness of composition which pleases soldiers, sailors and young people of bold and active dispositions."

Meantime Scott was engaged on other literary work; wrote much for the *Edinburgh Review* and edited editions of Dryden's works and Swift's. In 1809 he was instrumental in founding *The Quarterly Review* and became one of the managers of that Tory periodical, though he was by no means in sympathy with the truculent style of reviewing and criticism that Gifford and Croker introduced to his pages.

"The Lady of the Lake" was published in May, 1810, and still more increased Scott's fame. Twenty thousand copies were sold in a few months. Fitz James and Roderick Dhu, Malcolm and Ellen were characters which attracted remarkable interest, while the descriptions of Highland scenery and manners made that part of Scotland immensely popular. Crowds from all parts of England and Scotland flocked to view Loch Katrine and the various scenes of the poem.

It is a story in verse, and illustrates Scott's power in that respect better than his two first poems. It is the high-water mark of his poetical fame. His succeeding poems, "Rokeby," "The Vision of Don Roderick," "The Bridal of Triermain," "Harold The Dauntless" and "The Lord of the Isles" added nothing to his reputation, though each has peculiar merits. But another poet had appeared to contest for the supremacy in the world of poetry. "Childe Harold" was published in 1812, and for a time, at least, Byron was the idol of the hour. His poetry struck a new vein, and easily won the applause of a public always seeking for some new thing. Scott retired from the field and sought a new domain, and obtained a scepter of which he has never been deprived. In 1814 the novel of "Waverley" appeared unheralded and without a sponsor. It had been commenced in 1805, but Scott having submitted the opening chapters to a friend, had received an unfavorable judgment on them, and as a consequence threw the work aside. Accident brought it to his attention again and he completed the story. It rapidly won its way to popular favor, and its authorship was soon guessed. Scott maintained silence in respect to authorship of the novel, and it was not until after the failure

of the Ballantynes that he publicly avowed the sole responsibility for the famous novels "Waverley," "Guy Mannering," "Ivanhoe," "The Heart of Mid-Lothian," "Rob Roy" and all the rest. Who does not know their names by heart? It is from them we have learned history, just as we have from Shakespeare. Nowhere can more exact portraitures be found than Scott has given us of Richard, Elizabeth, James I., Louis XI., Charles the Bold and the two Pretenders. Not less real are the imaginary creations, Baron Bradwardine, Monkbarns, Meg Merrilies, Dandie Dinmont, Dugald Dalgetty, Baillie Nicol Jarvie and a hundred others. These are living human beings, and in creative power, rank Scott next to Shakespeare.

Carlyle criticises Scott because he wrote for money and desired more to found a family than to obtain a name in literature. The same charge can be made against Shakespeare, who left the immortal plays to take care of themselves, while he retired to Stratford to take his ease as a country gentleman.

Scott seemed to take no greater pride in his works and never acknowledged their authorship until after the bankruptcy of his printing house. Meantime he used the immense sums he gained by

his pen to beautify his beloved Abbotsford and to add acre upon acre to its domain. While the novels were appearing with a rapidity that dazzled all belief that they could be the work of a single hand, he appeared to be a man of leisure, a country gentleman, interested in his farms, a sheriff of his county concerned with public duties. His literary work was done in the early morning before breakfast, entirely unsuspected by his many guests, and even by the members of his family. Down to the year 1825 Scott seemed to be the most fortunate of men. All that wealth and power and friendship could bestow was his. Happy in his family, happy in his friends, happy in his world-wide fame, it hardly seemed possible that such a life could close in sorrow and disappointment. But the business house failed and Scott found himself liable for the enormous sum of £117,000. At a single blow all that he had worked for, and of which he was so proud, seemed to be swept away from him. Then his wife died, and the life vanished from his hearthstone.

And now he resolutely set himself to work to pay off his creditors, and for six years toiled like a galley slave. No better known episode in our literature is there than that pathetic story. He

gained enormous sums, and when, six years later, the pen dropped from his hand, and overborne by his herculean labor, he passed away from earth, the indebtedness, though not all paid, was in the course of ultimate extinction.

No more manly, no more charming novels, exist in any language than those of Sir Walter Scott. They abound with the spirit of chivalry and patriotism. They could be read by all young people, and those of more mature judgment will find them attractive and stimulating. As a relief from the cares of life, and as a means of relaxation, I know of nothing so valuable as a course of Waverley novels.

# WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

(1770-1850.)

WORDSWORTH'S position in literature has been the cause of more wrangling among the critics than that of any other poet. Was he the greatest of English poets after Shakespeare, or must his name follow those of some of his contemporaries, such as Byron, Shelley, Scott, Keats and Coleridge? It is a dispute that has been going on for at least three-quarters of a century and is really as far from settlement as ever. That is to say, there seems to be no general popular sentiment as to where Wordsworth should stand in the English Pantheon, and, as Dr. Johnson said in respect to Gray, "it is by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honors." That is to say, after we have heard all that the critics have to say for and

against the claims made for any poet, we then read for ourselves, and in the light of the argument decide the question. But in this case the difficulty is that when we take up a volume of Wordsworth's poems we read one containing the most elevated and ennobling sentiments clothed in superb diction, such as the great odes "On Duty" or "Intimations of Immortality," and say "here is indeed the greatest of poets." We turn a page or two and come upon "The Idiot Boy," or "Goody Blake," or "Peter Bell," and the volume is thrown down with disgust. We are ready to place the poet on a level with his idiot boy. Unless indeed we are born Wordsworthians, and then we accept every line he wrote with the submission with which good Mohammedans receive the Koran.

Wordsworth was long in receiving any sort of recognition from the public or the critics. His first volume, "An Evening Walk," was published in 1793, and he was admonished by the critics to "amend his lines" if he wished to be considered a poet. He continued to write and publish for many years, and the praise he got was in proportion to the censure as one to twenty. When "The Excursion" appeared in 1814 Jeffrey burst out with the now memorable phrase, "This will

never do." The next year came "The White Doe of Rylstone," and Jeffrey said it was the very worst poem ever imprinted in a quarto volume. "In the Lyrical Ballads he [Wordsworth] was exhibited, on the whole, in a state of very pretty deliration; but in the poem before us he appears in a state of low, maudlin imbecility which would not have misbecome Master Silence himself, in the close of a social day."

Jeffrey's judgment on these poems has generally been accepted, although "The Excursion" contains many noble passages. But its length, and often tediousness, confounds and paralyzes the majority of readers even where they honestly wish to compass the whole of it. Wordsworth's greatest poetry was written prior to 1808, but it was not until after 1830 that he began to receive just appreciation. To the day of his death he was not popular, nor can it be said that he has been at any time since. Ruskin and Matthew Arnold have done the most by their appreciation of Wordsworth to render his poetry popular, but, great critics though they are, their success has only been partial.

And yet when all has been said that can be said about the silliness and fatuity of much of Wordsworth's verse, there remains a splendid

mass that will be as imperishable as the tongue in which it is written, full of the noblest thoughts and the most beautiful imagery. Wordsworth was mistaken in his theory of simplicity and in his effort to render the commonplace poetical, just as many think Browning was mistaken along the same lines, but if we ignore his errors in this respect and read only his true poems, we will find that as the high priest of nature he stands unrivaled save by Shakespeare alone. He brings to the mind serenity and repose, and stirs the emotions to the love of beauty.

In his autobiography John Stuart Mill speaks of his first reading of Wordsworth's poems and of their effect upon him:

> What made his poems a medicine for my state of mind was that they expressed not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling and of thought colored by feeling under the excitement of beauty. I needed to be made to feel that there was real permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only without turning away from, but with greatly increased interest in, the common feelings and common destiny of human beings.

George Eliot, when she was twenty years of age, took up Wordsworth's poems and they became her favorites for life. "I never before," she said, "met with so many of my own feelings

expressed just as I should like them." Many other testimonies of a like sort might be given. Ruskin is never tired of acknowledging the debt he owes to Wordsworth.

An interesting fact as to the status of Wordsworth is revealed by Bartlett's "Book of Familiar Quotations." An examination of that work will show that Wordsworth is as much quoted as Byron, and is only exceeded by Shakespeare, Milton and Pope. The lines of Dryden, Shelley, Scott and Tennyson are not nearly so often in the mouths of others as are those of Wordsworth. And yet these poets are by far the more popular. How, then, are we to account for this superiority in quotation? The reason is this, that while Wordsworth has not had so many readers as the more popular poets, he has always had highly cultivated readers. Men, and women too, who had something to say to the world and found in Wordsworth the best expression for their thought. Charles Lamb called Spenser "the poet's poet." Wordsworth could with like felicity be called the "writer's poet," He made deep and lasting impression on Hazlitt, Lamb, Coleridge, De Quincey, Ruskin, Mill, Arnold and a host of others, who in their turn have made the nineteenth century literature what it is. Rejected by his own gener-

ation, Wordsworth became the inspiration of the next, nor is there any reason to doubt that he will continue to influence many generations to come.

# SAMUEL T. COLERIDGE.

(1772–1834.)

FROM every account we have, no man ever so impressed his contemporaries with the splendor of his intellectual powers as Samuel Taylor Coleridge did. "He is," wrote De Quincey, "the largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and most comprehensive that has yet existed among men." Hazlitt says: "He is the only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius; he is the only person from whom I ever learned anything. His genius had angelic wings and fed on manna. He talked on forever, and you wished him to talk on forever." Southey, Byron, Landor, Scott and Lamb deliver the same testimony. From childhood to old age he was regarded as a remarkable genius, destined to a great fame, and to leave a permanent impress on philosophy and literature. So far as actual performance on his part is concerned this expectation has been disappointed. Two or three

poems, a few criticisms, the fragmentary "Aids to Reflection," and several other pieces are about all that he left that the world now cares much about. The great mass of his work is fragmentary and incomplete. He was always about to do something—was going to begin—but his infirmity of purpose constantly interfered. He could not compel himself to sit at his desk, as Southey did, and perform an allotted task. He could only work or write when the mood was on him, and unhappily his personal indolence and the opium habit too often prevented the mood from coming. His life was a dream and his work almost as insubstantial. It is mournful to turn over the pages of his collected works and note how many pieces are mere "fragments."

Nevertheless, he had an immense influence upon his age, not through his works, but indirectly through the impress he made upon his contemporaries. He introduced into England a knowledge of German philosophy and literature. His criticisms on Shakespeare, delivered as lectures, were the best of their time, and have rarely been equalled since. His conversation was splendid monologue and powerfully influenced De Quincey, Southey, Hazlitt, John Sterling, Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and many other of the great English

thinkers. These men were not his disciples, but they received from him impulse and stimulus in lines of thought that otherwise would not have come to them. Besides such leaders in thought, Coleridge had a host of followers and disciples who hung upon his words and absorbed more or less of his ideas. Thus his unseen influence is incalculable.

What he might have performed, both as seer and singer, is evidenced by the fragments he has left. They have given him a high place among English poets and philosophers. No poet of the nineteenth century has shown greater original genius, or more imaginative power. Two of his poems, "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," will be read and remembered as long as men read literature.

The origin of "The Ancient Mariner" is interesting. Wordsworth and his sister had planned an excursion to Northern England with Coleridge, and to defray the expense the two poets determined to write some poetry for a magazine. Coleridge suggested a ballad to be called "The Ancient Mariner," which was founded upon a strange dream that a friend had, in which he saw a skeleton ship with figures in it. Wordsworth added the idea of shooting the

albatross, with the reanimation of the dead bodies to work the ship. He also wrote a few of the lines, but his style could not assimilate with Coleridge's, and to the latter poet, as a matter of course, belongs the whole credit of the production. It is the greatest ballad in the English language. Its felicities of language are unequaled, and its interest as a story is maintained from beginning to end. The lines dwell in the memory, and the word pictures are ineffaceable. The "Ancient Mariner" still holds us "with his glittering eye," and we cannot help but hear his story. We can see the ship, as it sails from the harbor, as it drives to the south and plunges through mist and snow and ice. Then came the albatross, bird of good omen, that brings fine weather.

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, or mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
While all the night, through fog-smoke white
Glimmered the white moonshine.

"God save thee, Ancient Mariner!
From the fiends that plague thee thus!
Why lookst thou so?" "With my cross-bow
I shot the albatross."

Then follow dreadful woes. The skeleton ship, the dead crew, the dancing demons and all the horrors of that fearful voyage are described as by an eye-witness. It is a most wonderful poem. "Christabel," uncompleted though it be, will always be read. It is a mystical romance, and was to have been extended to four cantos. Two only were written. The incidents are few. Christabel is surprised at night in a wood by Geraldine, a supernatural being, who personates the daughter of an estranged friend of Christabel's father. Christabel takes her to her father, to whom Geraldine relates a tale of abandonment and sorrow. Sir Leoline resolves to restore her to Sir Roland. The fragment ends with the mission of Bracy the bard, to the castle of Sir Roland. The poem abounds in beauties. Geraldine and Christabel beneath the oak, the two stepping lightly across the court, and Christabel's chamber are gems.

"Kubla Khan" is a fragment of weird beauty, founded on a dream, or rather composed by the poet in a dream. When he awoke he sat down to write it out. Before he had completed it, however, he was called away, as he says, "by a person on business from Porlock," and before he returned the impression of the dream had faded away and he was unable to recall it again to memory.

Alas for Coleridge! That "person from Porlock" or some other person or thing was always standing between him and completed work. His prose is as fragmentary as his poetry. His "Aids to Reflection" instructive as it is to the theological or philosophical student is incomplete. His Shakespearian criticisms were never written out in full. He was poet, preacher, journalist and metaphysician. He could have attained the highest eminence in any field that he attempted but he suffered all to pass by him. When we study what he has left for us we feel how great his genius was and mourn the inadequacy of his performance.

# ROBERT SOUTHEY.

(1774–1843.)

To turn from the study of Coleridge to the study of Southey is like leaving misty mountain tops and nature's wilds, to come down into an orderly trim garden, where there is much that is beautiful, but chiefly showing the results of persistent work and industry. In Newton's definition, genius is only another name for industry, and in that sense only Southey was a man of genius. But he was the most complete English man of letters since Johnson's time. His entire life is an illustration of the force of character and conscientious adherence to duty. Like Johnson, he lived for years by hack-work, earnestly and faithfully performed, and it is through a portion of that hack-work, and not through his poems, which he so surely thought to be immortal, that his fame survives to-day. Owing perhaps to the influence of Byron, whose satires on Southey have been more widely read than anything Southey

wrote, modern readers have not always done justice to him. But Byron himself in his magnanimous moments spoke highly of Southey. The two poets had met in 1813 and each found much to admire in the other. In his diary Byron wrote: "Southey's talents are of the first order. His prose is perfect. He has probably written too much of poetry for the present generation; posterity will probably select; but he has passages equal to anything." He also thought Southey's "Roderick" the first poem of the time. Southey placed a high estimate upon his own poetical genius and upon his poems. "Thalaba" he thought would make him immortal. Of the "Curse of Kehama" he wrote:

> Very, very few persons will like "Kehama"; everybody will wonder at it; it will increase my reputation without increasing my popularity; a general remark will be, what a pity that I have wasted so much power. I care little about this, having in the main pleased myself and all along amused myself. Every generation will afford me some half-dozen admirers of it and the everlasting column of Dante's fame does not stand upon a wider base.

At other times he freely compared himself with Tasso, Virgil and Homer. He thought himself also to be a great historian and declared that he would stand above Gibbon, Hume and

Robertson: "I have flattered myself that my 'History of Brazil' might in more points than one be compared to Herodotus." At another time he says: "As an historian I shall come nearer my mark. For thorough research, indeed, and range of materials, I do not believe that the 'History of Portugal' will ever have been surpassed." I may remark in passing that the "History of Portugal," for which Southey made vast preparation and collected immense material, never took form, and that the "History of Brazil" admirable as it is and rich in facts, is far too bulky for the readers of to-day.

Southey has been in his grave half a century and his immortal histories and poems are quite forgotten, but his fame is preserved in his biographies of Nelson, Wesley and Cowper, and in a few of his minor poems. As a writer Southey does not rank as a master of style, like De Quincey or Macaulay, but his manner is pleasing and has won the praise of such critics as John Morley and Professor Dowden. In a letter to Allan Cunningham, Southey says: "There may be secrets in painting, but there are none in style. When I have been asked the foolish question, what a young man should do who wishes to acquire a good style, my answer has been that he

should never think about it, but say what he has to say as perspicuously as he can and as briefly as he can, and then the style will take care of itself." That plan might do for Southey, with his vast reading and erudition, but it will not of itself give the literary quality essential to a good style. Southey loved books and collected one of the finest as well as one of the most useful private libraries in Great Britain. At the time of his death it numbered fourteen thousand volumes. He chose his books both for their contents and their appearance, and in his collection were many rare and curious treasures. One of his most pleasing poems is entitled "My Library." The first two stanzas are as follows :

My days among the dead are passed ;
  Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
  The mighty minds of old ;
My never failing friends are they
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal
  And seek relief in woe ;
And while I understand and feel
  How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

In his last years, when his mind was giving way

and he was no longer able to read, he would wander amid his books and pat them with affection.

Southey pursued the literary calling for fully half a century, and for the greater part of that time writing for the means of daily subsistence. In addition to his own family he supported Coleridge's wife and children, when that irresponsible genius deserted them. His industry was wonderful, and all that he wrote would fill two hundred volumes. For years he was a constant and acceptable contributor to *The Quarterly*. He would often have three or four works in hand at the same time, besides reading much, as his commonplace book shows. The work of his that is the most attractive to the studious reader is "The Adventures of Doctor Daniel Dove." It is crammed with all sorts of curious learning, and reminds one of Rabelais, Sterne, old Burton and Montaigne. It is a wonderful book, and Poe said that its wit and humor had rarely been equalled. The "Life of Nelson" has long been an English classic. The subject was peculiarly attractive to Southey and aroused his enthusiasm. "The best eulogy of Nelson," he says, "is the faithful history of his actions; the best history that which shall relate them most perspicuously." And at the close, when the great admiral lay dead upon the deck of

the "Victory," Southey says: "If the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory."

The "Life of Wesley" was one of Coleridge's favorites, a book that he could read when he could read nothing else. The "Life of Cowper" was also one that Southey wrote with sympathetic interest. His translations, particularly "The Cid," are most excellent. Southey's own life was as uneventful as ever fell to the lot of a man of letters. Born at Bristol in 1774 he received his education through the benevolence of a maternal aunt. At Oxford, where he spent a year or two, but did not graduate, he first met Coleridge. They became warm friends, and when still young and very poor, married sisters. With the inborn sense of responsibility that ever characterized him, Southey went to work faithfully and creditably supported his family. In 1803 he removed to Keswick in the north of England, lake region, and there he resided until his death in 1843. In 1813 he was appointed poet-laureate, a post he owed to the generosity of Scott to whom it was first offered.

In his youth Southey had been imbued with rather wild notions regarding socialism and de-

mocracy, and at one time he with Coleridge and some other friends meditated a movement to be called Pantisocracy, and a community was to be planted on the banks of the Susquehanna. Their poverty compelled an abandonment of the scheme. Later Southey abandoned his dreams of Jacobinism, and became a High Churchman and a Tory. This was the foundation of the attacks made upon him by Byron and others, as an apostate and renegade.

Southey's letters to his friends are most admirable, and in them we see the loyalty and faithfulness of the man. They are the best of his works, and will preserve his name and fame, when the very names of "Madoc" and "Thalaba" and "Kehama" have passed from the memory of man.

# LORD BYRON.

(1788-1824.)

With the opening of the nineteenth century modern English literature begins. Cowper, Burns and Scott had given it direction and impetus, but it was reserved for Byron, Shelley and Keats to invent forms of poetic expression that would make it permanent and bring it in accord with the common thought of the common people. These men were prophets of the people, but of the three Byron spoke the most readily to the average mind and heart. "Childe Harold" was a revelation. Behind the author there was a man; behind the sentiment a throbbing human heart. No poem ever made so immediate a sensation.

Byron's life was not happy. Take it altogether, there is no particular place in his whole career where he may be envied. Of course that is what anybody can say about any person, and I am quite certain that there is no position or point in

life where one person would be willing to assume the burdens and blessings of another, no matter what his fortune.

Byron essayed juvenile authorship and was cruelly criticised. It was a foolish exploit on the part of the *Edinburgh Review*, and yet a natural one. "Poems by a Noble Lord" was a subject for a satirist, and so Brougham scored them. That of itself was a small matter, but it happened to awaken the animosity of the youthful bard and his genius. He first of all visited upon his reviewers his personal resentment in a form now classic in modern literature—"The English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," and then he proceeded to write a poem that brought the world to his feet. It was published in 1812 and in his own often quoted words, he awoke to find himself famous. The poem itself was a revelation to the world of literature and of poetry. It describes the many-sidedness of the human mind, and marks Byron as one of the foremost poets of his time, and one whose writings must be studied most carefully, if you would know the literature of that time. "Childe Harold" is for all ages of the world, and can be read with instruction and delight by all classes of readers. It is classic, and yet modern. Byron himself was generally supposed to be the

hero, but the poet most strenuously denied this. It is certainly not an autobiography, but when it was published the public were fascinated by all they could learn of the youthful poet, and excused his cynicism because of his first misadventure in the realm of poesy. The hero of the poem, "The Wandering Childe," is a young nobleman, unhappy through some mysterious sorrow, who by travel seeks to find some sweet, oblivious antidote for all his sorrows. It is, therefore, not unnatural that Byron should have been deemed his own hero. But it may now be taken as assured that while the travels were such as Byron made, the poem in all other respects is solely a work of imagination.

The second and third cantos of "Childe Harold" were written after Byron's self-exile from England, and when he had probably reached his highest power. They are far greater in thought, in elevation of sentiment, and in imagination than anything to be found in the first canto. They show a complete knowledge of life as well as a profound study of nature. There are passages in them familiar to every schoolboy, and yet, after infinite repetitions, never lose their interest or their force. In this respect Byron rivals Shakespeare. Who is there that ever tires

of the description of Waterloo, of Venice, of the "Arrowy Rhone," or of the "dark and deep blue ocean." These are passages that melt one to tears on their recitation, proving how deeply they are akin to the best sentiments of the human heart.

The poem has been called an itinerary of European travel, and certainly no one should ever travel down the Rhine or through the Alps without "Childe Harold" either in his hand or memory. There are no descriptions in poetry equal to Byron's. His Venice is a masterpiece. The Drachenfels, Ehrenbreitstein, the Alps and placid Leman are shown us as if in a series of pictures. The tempest in the third canto is inexpressibly grand.

> The sky is changed—and such a change! O night
> And storm and darkness! Ye are wondrous strong.
> Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
> Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
> From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
> Leaps the live thunder.

Then there are the nine stanzas, beginning "It is the hush of night." These alone would make the reputation of a modern poet.

But there are a thousand beauties that every one will surely pick out for himself. And we

are quite sure that every one will delight in searching out those beauties that have been merely indicated here.

It has often been said that Byron was not an original writer. This charge can be proved in certain respects, just as it can be proved against Shakespeare. Did not the poet of all time steal all his plots and thousands of his lines? And yet who questions his originality. So there are hundreds of Byron's thoughts and expressions that can be traced to Rousseau, Voltaire, Lauzun, Bayle, St. Pierre, La Bruyère, Wieland, Swift, Sterne, Le Sage, Goethe and the Bible and many other sources. It is to be said of him that he was not ashamed of his piracy. He followed Molière's maxim and took his own wherever he found it, and he made it all the better for the resetting he gave it. He recast dull metal and gave it form and beauty, and if other poets and writers could discover his secret and imitate him, the world would have a greater literature.

"Childe Harold" is undoubtedly Byron's greatest poem, and was written when he was only twenty-four. Read aright it is not a cynical poem as many people suppose, as some critics have said. Byron was a many-sided man, and his thoughts are also many-sided. The more one

reads him the more one learns the depth of thought there was in this young man of twenty-four. —There, too, is his sympathy with the Spanish peasant, his apotheosis of the heroism of woman, his burning cry for liberty and his love for all that is beautiful in nature. Beneath the thin garb of cynicism there beat the pulse for freedom, for generosity and for all heroic acts. His description of the battle-fields of Spain, of Talavera and the rest, set England wild with patriotic fervor. Thus it was that when the poem appeared it conquered the nation, thirsting and hungering for a spokesman or poet to speak according to the exigency of the time.

While the "Childe Harold" is the chief poem by which Byron is known, and the one that will give him a permanent place in English literature, it is by no means the whole of his title. All of his work has greatness to it, and whether we read the "Corsair," or the "Giaour," the "Bride of Abydos," or "Don Juan," we feel equally impressed with the superbness of the genius which can so exquisitely express the feelings of the human soul. Byron belongs to the choicest spirits of English poesy in all ages. And yet his fame has been well-nigh as fitful as his stormy life. He published the first two cantos of "Childe

Harold," and became the petted hero of the hour. The world threw itself at his feet. For two years his appetite was cloyed with adulation. Then came the revulsion. He married, he quarreled with his wife, in little more than a year separated from her, and from that time British virtue pursued him like Nemesis. He fled from England, his life was reported to be vicious, he espoused the cause of Greece, and, broken in health and fortune, died at the age of thirty-six. His body was refused burial in Westminster Abbey, and his fame sank more and more, until, in 1840, Carlyle could write: "Nobody reads Byron now." His own generation had exalted him to the skies. The succeeding one, for which Carlyle spoke, rudely thrust him aside as not worthy of consideration. The present generation of readers have held themselves in equipoise, not yet entirely free from the earlier influences, but still inclined to return to the devotion of their fathers.

Take him altogether I look upon him as the greatest literary power of the century.

But his personal life was far from happy, and it is so familiar that a repetition of it here is almost unnecessary. He was born in 1788, his father being a naval officer of noble birth who, having lived a profligate life, married for a second

wife Catherine Gordon, a Scotch heiress. In the family ancestry the Byrons were distinguished for recklessness and bad luck. Byron's father run through his wife's fortune, and then died, leaving the mother to bring up a son whom she, too, often designated as a "lame brat," for the poor child had a withered foot from infancy. The mother's uneven temper told upon the boy and, unhappily, as he grew older the world looked upon him as his mother had done, with fondness and coldness by turns. The result was, as we all know, that in childhood, youth and manhood he never was treated with justness. He made his triumphs through the power of genius, he sacrificed his life in a Quixotic expedition. His works remain. They may be read again and again with profit and delight by all who love literature and desire to know the full beauties of the English tongue.

# SHELLEY AND HIS LETTERS.

(1792–1822.)

In the literature of letters Shelley's correspondence has always stood very high. Indeed some of the critics—Matthew Arnold among them—have praised them extravagantly and said that his best and most enduring work will ultimately be found in his prose, such as his letters and his unfinished "Defense of Poetry." This judgment is ill considered and untenable. Fine as his prose undoubtedly is, Shelley's fame is imperishably based on such poems as "Prometheus Unbound," the "Ode to the West Wind," the "Cloud," "Adonais," "To Constantia Singing" and a dozen other lyrics and short pieces unsurpassed by anything in the language. But one can enjoy his letters and find therein a thousand beauties without having to subscribe to the opinion that they are the best of his works, or even the best letters in the language. As letters they are not equal to Walpole's or Lady Mary's, though

they may be classed with those of Cowper and of Gray. Many of them are full of poetic description, others reveal himself and others tell of his occupations.

In a letter to William Godwin written when he was twenty, after his expulsion from Oxford and while he was in rebellion against his father, he describes himself:

> I am the son of a man of fortune in Sussex. The habits of thinking of my father and myself never coincided. Passive obedience was inculcated and enforced in my childhood. I was required to love, because it was my duty to love; it is scarcely necessary to remark that coercion obviated its own intention. I was haunted with a passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances, Ancient books of chemistry and magic were perused with an enthusiasm of wonder almost to belief. My sentiments were unrestrained by anything within me: external impediments were numerous and strongly applied: their effect was merely temporary.

This is the keynote to Shelley's character. What he was as a boy, a rebel against parental authority and oppression, such he was as a man —a rebel against the world's authority.

When this letter was written he had already made the unhappy marriage with Harriet Westbrook, which ended in tragedy. Nor was Godwin's influence over the impressionable poet altogether happy, though the influence of Mary

Godwin, who subsequently became Mrs. Shelley, was altogether happy and beneficent.

One of his principal correspondents was Thomas Love Peacock, who was his lifelong friend, a few years his senior, and who long survived him. From 1816 until his death in 1822 Shelley kept up an intimate correspondence with Mr. Peacock, and these letters are his best. The major part of the letters are written from Italy. When at Milan he tells of the scenery and beauties of Lake Como; from Bologna he writes of the galleries of art; at Rome of the past glories of the Eternal City, of the seven hills and of the Coliseum. He is carried away by the splendor and memories of Rome, and cries from his impassioned heart, "Come to Rome!" At Naples he sees Vesuvius in flames and visits Pompeii and Lake Avernus, seeing everything and describing everything with the poet's mind and heart.

From Venice he writes that he had seen Lord Byron and found him changed for the better, "the liveliest and happiest looking man I ever met. He read me the first canto of his 'Don Juan'—a thing in the style of 'Beppo,' but infinitely better, and dedicated to Southey, in ten or a dozen stanzas more like a mixture of wormwood and verdigris than satire." He comments

on the City of the Doges, then under the dominion of Austria, and its lost glories. Even the name of Tasso seemed to have been forgotten.

From Ravenna, where he has again met Lord Byron, he writes to his wife:

We ride out in the evening through the pine forests which divide this city from the sea. Our way of life is this, and I have accommodated myself to it without much difficulty, L. B. gets up at 2, breakfasts; we talk, read, etc., until 6; then we ride, and dine at 8, and after dinner sit talking till 4 or 5 in the morning. I get up at 12. L. B. is greatly improved in every respect. In genius, in temper, in moral views, in health, in happiness. The connection with La Guiccioli has been an inestimable benefit to him. He lives in considerable splendor, but within his income, which is now about £4,000 a year. . . . . He has read to me one of the unpublished cantos of "Don Juan," which is astonishingly fine.' It sets him not only above, but far above, all the poets of the day—every word is stamped with immortality. I despair of rivaling Lord Byron, as well I may, and there is no other with whom it is worth contending. . . . . He has finished his "Life" up to the present time and given it to Moore, with liberty for Moore to sell it for the best price he can get, with condition that the bookseller should publish it after his death. Moore has sold it to Murray for £2,000.

It will be remembered that after Byron's death this "Life" was destroyed, and Moore wrote another. Shelley's last letter was written to his wife a few days before that fatal voyage from Leghorn, when his yacht was lost in the storm.

How are you, my best Mary? Write especially how is your health, and how your spirits are, and whether you are not more reconciled to staying at Lerici, at least during the summer. Ever, dearest Mary, yours, affectionately.

They never met again.

# JOHN KEATS.

## (1795-1821).

In the Protestant burying-ground in Rome, there may still be read this inscription over the grave of an English poet: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." John Keats lies buried there, but his name and fame are more enduring than he had hoped or dreamed. Neglected in his lifetime and for thirty years after his death, a generation at last appeared that appreciated his genius and cherished his memory. The publication by Lord Houghton, in 1848, of the "Life and Letters of Keats" awakened an interest in the long forgotten poet, never before manifested, and from that day his fame has steadily increased until he now ranks among the foremost poets of his time, if, indeed, he is not the very foremost. This is saying much when we remember that he was the contemporary of Wordsworth and Coleridge, of Byron and Shelley, and yet this is the

estimate placed upon him by Matthew Arnold, who ranks him with Shakespeare.

John Keats was born in London, October 31, 1795, and died at Rome, February 23, 1821. His parents died when he was still young, and after a few years of schooling he was apprenticed at the age of fourteen to a surgeon. One day he obtained a copy of Spenser's "Faerie Queen," and that great poem awakened the sleeping poet within him. Spenser has been called the "Poet's poet," and he proved to be so in Keats' case. Genius began to manifest itself, and it was not long in finding expression in verse. In 1817 Keats published a small volume of poems, but with the exception of a single sonnet, containing nothing of particular merit. This is the sonnet entitled "On first Looking into Chapman's Homer." The story of this famous sonnet, which many critics think one of the finest in the language, has been told by Charles Cowden Clarke, the poet's schoolmate and friend.—Clarke had procured Chapman's translation of the Iliad, and the two young men sat up until daylight reading and repeating the lines. Inspired by the great Elizabethan, Keats sat down, and as if by inspiration, wrote the sonnet. It is, doubtless, familiar to many of my readers, but it will always bear repeti-

tion. Dante Rossetti has said that the last line is the most perfect single line of poetry in the language:

"Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet never did I breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold.
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise,
Silent upon a peak in Darien."

This was first published in 1817, and it seems strange to us in this day, that any critic could read that exquisite imagery and not perceive that a new poet had appeared in the world. But the criticism in the first quarter of the century was not based on merit, but on prejudice. Gifford and Croker and Lockhart were more apt to think of the politics of a writer than of his performance—and while Keats was insignificant as a politician, it so happened that he was a friend of Leigh Hunt, who edited a liberal paper. Consequently when "Endymion" appeared in 1818, and Hunt

praised it, *The Quarterly* and *Blackwood* fell on it without mercy. This was Keats' first long poem, and while it has many and great beauties, it also has the faults of a youthful and exuberant imagination. The opening is known by everyone:

> A thing of beauty is a joy forever,
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness.

The imagery of the poem is so profuse, and the story so vague, that one is apt to tire before the end is reached. But it is a noble piece of versification, teeming with beauties, and worthy of profound study. Undoubtedly the severe criticisms the poem met with at the hands of the reviewers affected Keats not a little, for he had boundless ambition and a pardonable desire for praise—but it is too much to say as was once said, that they killed him. Byron's savage epigram will be remembered:

> Who killed John Keats?
> I, says "The Quarterly"
> So savage and tartarly,
> I killed John Keats.

Shelley believed that the early death of Keats

was due to the critics, and his monody entitled "Adonais" contains a bitter retort on Gifford.

It is now understood that Gifford did not write the review that appeared in *The Quarterly*. Lord Houghton does not think that Keats' death was materially hastened by the attack upon his poem. He died of hereditary consumption. Although his spirit was depressed, he continued to write, and in his three remaining years after "Endymion," produced his greatest works. "Isabella," "Lamia," "The Eve of St. Agnes," some of his odes, and "Hyperion" are the products of these years; and while the language lasts, they will endure. "Hyperion" is a grand and majestic fragment; a story of the gods, and marks the highest flight of the poet's genius. His most perfect poem is "The Eve of St. Agnes," and is a series of magnificent word pictures, every stanza standing out in relief. Few poems have been so often illustrated by the great artists. The story is vague, and the merest nothing, but it leaves an impression on the mind of the reader that is never forgotten. We see the chapel and the ancient Beadsman—we hear the music whose golden tongue "Flattered to tears this aged man and poor;" we see the "argent revelry" as it bursts into the grand hall, "with plume, tiara

and all rich array." And then we behold the thoughtful Madeline, who scarcely heard the music nor saw the amorous cavaliers about her, but was sighing for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year. Her heart was rapt with the old superstition that if she went supperless to bed, nor looked behind nor sideways, Heaven would grant her a vision of her lover. Full of this whim she soon retires. Across the moors young Porphyro comes "with heart on fire for Madeline." He ventures in, but it is the home of his deadliest enemies. Through the friendship of the aged crone Angela, he gains access to Madeline's chamber and witnesses her devotions to sweet St. Agnes. When she sleeps he takes the lute and plays soft strains upon it. He heaps the table with cates and dainties. She awakes from her dream and sees her lover. An elfin storm comes up and together they fly from the castle.

> And they are gone: aye, ages long ago,
> These lovers fled away into the storm.

Another of the minor poems remarkable for beauty and simplicity, is "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." It is the perfection of poetic art. It is brief, containing but a few stanzas, but the story of unrequited love is told fully. When once read,

like almost everything Keats wrote—it leaves an ineffaceable picture in the memory, and we forever see the wandering and disconsolate knight on "the cold hillside."

> Ah, what can ail thee, knight at arms,
> Alone and palely loitering?
> The sedge is withered from the lake,
> And no birds sing.

The odes "To a Nightingale," "On a Grecian Urn," and "To Psyche" have each peculiar and exquisite beauties, and bring to the reader that peculiar pleasure that Keats himself describes in the opening stanza of the ode to a nightingale. They are superb and worthy of constant study. They may be read again and again with ever renewed delight.

# LEIGH HUNT.

(1784–1859.)

One of the writers in English literature who can be best described as delightful, is Leigh Hunt, poet, essayist and critic. He was the associate and friend of Shelley, Byron, Keats, Lamb, Hazlitt, Proctor, Haydon, De Quincey, Carlyle, Dickens, and a host of celebrities of his time. His career subtends all that is best in nineteenth century literature, commencing under the Prince Regent and ending with Victoria. Even Professor Wilson who, in the early days of *Blackwood*, had lampooned him most severely, grew to love him and at the last spoke words of praise for him. Macaulay admired his literary style and thoroughly appreciated his critical powers, while Carlyle, much against his usual habit with men, spoke of him with appreciation. In truth I do not know of another contemporary author of whom Carlyle spoke so well as of Leigh Hunt. He must,

therefore, have had many winning graces, both in speech and manner, to have escaped from the more than drastic criticism that Carlyle too freely expressed concerning the men he first met with when he went up to London.

Hunt lived a purely literary life, no man ever more so. He was absorbed in books, and before he was thirty he had English literature at his finger tips. He is the best guide over the whole field of that literature that has ever written upon it, not excepting even Hazlitt and Lamb. He is the very Ariel of criticism, kindly, gentle and loving. His judgments on the old books and writers are unerring, and his writings are one of the best of gateways to the Elizabethan literature. Nowhere is the grace and tenderness, the fancy and sweetness, the wit, the humor and the music of English letters better shown forth than in the writings of this delightful essayist. Let any one sit down with Hunt's "Imagination and Fancy," his "Wit and Humor," or his "Book for a Corner," and he will find the charm of this most genial soul and arise thrice blessed in his knowledge of what is sweetest and best in English poetry. In these he is seen at his best, though he wrote much else that is charming and enjoyable. But in these he gives selections from the great English poets,

from Spenser to Keats, with critical remarks of the highest value.

Hunt was educated at Christ's Hospital, where Lamb and Coleridge had preceded him. When still a youth he undertook, with his brother, the publication of a newspaper called *The Examiner*, and its radical political tone soon brought him trouble. A lampoon on the Prince Regent resulted in a trial for criminal libel, and the brothers were esteemed to have gotten lightly off with a punishment of two years in jail and a fine of several hundred pounds. This martyrdom brought Hunt many friends, and among them Shelley and Keats. They became warm friends, and Hunt exerted a remarkable literary influence over the two poets. His chief poem is "The Story of Remini," and while it has great merit in itself, and is a triumph of poetical narrative, felicitous, musical and unhackneyed, it nevertheless pointed out a form of verse to Shelley and Keats which they adopting, made greater than anything Hunt could have achieved, yet he led the way.

Hunt was a few years the eldest of the three, but they were near enough of an age to be associates, and they felt a generous rivalry. Hunt's finest sonnet was the result of a contest between them in that form of versification on the subject

of "The Nile." Each was to write his sonnet and submit it to the judgment of the three. The following is Hunt's sonnet:

It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream;
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal stands—
Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands
That roamed through the young earth, the glory extreme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,
The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.
Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us, and then we wake
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
'Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake.

It is a piece of very exquisite poesy, and the two younger poets spontaneously awarded the supremacy to Hunt. "The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands" is one of the most superb lines in our literature.

Certainly it is not to be contended that by this one happy effort, Hunt is to be placed as a poet above Shelley or Keats. By no means. But it does show that he had a high poetic genius, and that his life and works are very well worthy of consideration. Hunt's lyrics and short verses

are also very good, and one of them, because of the association, has been often quoted. Mrs. Carlyle is the heroine.

Jennie kissed me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I'm growing old—but add
Jennie kissed me.

There are not many verses more light and airy than that.

Hunt wrote much, and in almost every sort of writing. His tales from the Italian poets, and his rendition of Dante, are splendid introductions to that great literature. His poem of "Abou Ben Adhem," will never be forgotten, while his autobiography is a most delightful piece of writing. In it we find well-drawn portraits of Byron, Shelley, Keats, Lamb, Hazlitt and Coleridge, with glimpses of many others of the eminent men of the early century. His letters, too, are graceful, and there is no question but that one must go to Hunt to obtain a full knowledge of nineteenth century literature.

Hunt did not live in a corner but impressed

himself upon the men of his time, yet in one way quite unpleasantly. Unhappily he had no sense of money obligation, and in all the memoirs, letters and diaries of the time we get this view of him. Men can forgive every other human fault than looseness in respect to money. Years ago Bulwer wrote an essay on "The Management of Money," in which he said "Money is character." It is an aphorism to which time constantly gives proof. Hunt was thriftless and would accept money from any person. Carlyle records how he left shillings and sovereigns on his mantelpiece for Hunt to pick up, and Macaulay has entries in his diary how he "loaned" money to him constantly. Dickens was supposed to have drawn him in the character of Harold Skimpole, though when pressed he denied it. Certainly there was nothing of the heartlessness about Hunt that was portrayed in Skimpole. Nevertheless, as long as "Bleak House" is read, Hunt will stand as the original of Skimpole, though it is terribly unjust to the memory of a great and lovable man. Hunt died in 1859 in his seventy-fifth year. He was one of the most appreciative of critics, and his guidance through the mazes of our literature is safe and genial.

# SAMUEL ROGERS.

(1763–1855.)

THE following verses have always been much admired by lovers of poetry:

Hail, Memory, hail! In thy exhaustless mine
From age to age unnumbered treasures shine,
Thought and her shadowy brood thy call obey,
And place and time are subject to thy sway,
Thy pleasures most we feel when most alone;
The only pleasures we can call our own.
Lighter than air, Hope's summer visions die,
If but a fleeting cloud obscure the sky;
If but a beam of sober Reason play,
So Fancy's fairy frost-work melts away.
But can the wiles of art, the grasp of power,
Snatch the rich relics of a well-spent hour?
These, when the trembling spirit wings her flight,
Pour round her path a stream of living light;
And gild those pure and perfect realms of rest
Where virtue triumphs, and her sons are blest.

They are the concluding lines of a once very celebrated poem, "The Pleasures of Memory," by Samuel Rogers.

Both poem and poet are now tolerably well forgotten, but it is worth recalling that less than a hundred years ago Rogers was considered to be one of the greatest of English poets. Byron writing in his journal says: "Scott is undoubtedly the monarch of Parnassus and the most English of bards. I should place Rogers next in the living list. I value him more as the last of the best school; Moore and Campbell both third."

Nor was Byron alone in this opinion. The leading critics of the early part of the last century united in placing Rogers among the foremost poets of that period—a period that included Wordsworth and Coleridge, Scott and Byron, Shelley and Keats.

Time has not justified that early verdict, but the "Pleasures of Memory" is a poem still well worth reading, and the poet himself was a very remarkable man.

If refined tastes, love of literature, wealth, honor, and length of days constitute human happiness Samuel Rogers ought to have been one of the happiest of men. He was born in London in 1763 and died in 1855 when past his ninety-second year. His father was a banker, and Samuel succeeded him as head of the firm when thirty years of age. At forty he retired with a

handsome income, set up a modest establishment in a pleasant quarter of London, surrounded himself with books and works of art, and for the remainder of his long life wrote, traveled and entertained his friends, associating with the most distinguished men and women of his time, and knowing every European of distinction worth knowing.

It was at his table the intimacy between Byron and Moore was begun, where the brilliant Sheridan uttered his happiest witticisms, where Mme. De Staël triumphed in argument over Mackintosh, where Erskine related the story of his first brief, where Wellington described the battle of Waterloo, and where Sydney Smith humorously lamented over Macaulay's torrent of talk, which would be improved by a "few flashes of silence."

Old Dr. Burney, who had known London society for half a century, wrote of Rogers in 1804, saying: "He gives the best dinners to the best company of men of talents and genius I know."

The biographies, memoirs and correspondence of the most eminent men and women of the first half of the nineteenth century, abound with references to Rogers, and particularly to his breakfasts and the company he entertained.

Rogers had a great reputation for keen, incisive and witty satire in conversation. His own humorous excuse for some of his sharp sayings was that his voice was weak and nobody would hear him or pay any attention if he only maintained good humor. Some one complained to the poet, Campbell, once that Rogers said bitter things about his friends. "Borrow five hundred pounds of him," replied the poet, "and he will never say one word against you until you want to repay him."

He was liberal and charitable with his money, and was free in aiding his friends and those who needed assistance.

He was very fond of Tom Moore, but was disposed to treat him much as Dr. Johnson treated Garrick; he would not suffer any one else to criticise him, but never spared him himself.

One of his remarks about Moore was, "Moore dines in one place, wishing he was dining in another place, with an opera ticket in his pocket which makes him wish he was dining nowhere." He was one of Landseer's earliest admirers and patrons. Once when the artist had heard that Rogers had praised the picture of a Newfoundland dog he expressed to him his gratification.

"Yes," said Rogers, "I thought the ring of the dog's collar well painted."

One day at dinner Mrs. Proctor called across the table to him: "Now, Mr. Rogers, I am sure you are attacking me." "Attacking you, my dear lady," was the quick response, "I who pass my life in defending you?"

A volume of Rogers' "Table Talk" has been published, and it gives an interesting picture of English society for more than half a century.

The best known of Rogers' poems is "The Pleasures of Memory." It was published in 1792, when the general level of English poetry was very low, and it consequently met with more favor than it might otherwise have done. It is written in the style of Pope, and many of its lines, such as those above quoted, are excessively polished and finished. He composed very slowly and labored over his verse with great pains. Sydney Smith used to say of him: "Mr. Rogers has been brought to bed with another couplet to-day. Parent and child are doing well."

He wrote two other long poems, one entitled "Human Life," published in 1819, and the other, "Italy," published in 1834. The latter was magnificently illustrated by Turner and other celebrated English artists.

When Wordsworth died in 1850 the laureateship was offered to Rogers, but he was too far advanced in life to accept it. The office was then given to Tennyson.

Several anecdotes of Rogers are related in Tennyson's biography, for Tennyson admired the old poet and the latter often consulted him, esteeming him to be the coming poet.

"When I first knew Rogers," Tennyson once said, "he more than once asked me to go and see him; for a long time I refused, but at last I went and was fully repaid. I knew him well and often breakfasted with him and spent long half days in his society." And again he says, "He was a kindly old man, except when he was bilious."

He was a most interesting character, and whether he belongs to literature or not, he most assuredly belongs to literary history.

# THOMAS MOORE.

## "LALLA ROOKH" AND ITS AUTHOR.

(1779–1852.)

In May, 1817, a poem was published in London which exceeded in popularity everything that had yet been written by any one of that brilliant group of English poets whose names adorn the literature of the first part of the nineteenth century. Within six months it ran through a half dozen editions, and it was translated into almost every language of Europe, and into at least one oriental tongue. In the course of a few years it was carried around the world and was read everywhere with admiration, on the banks of the Ohio as eagerly as on the banks of the Seine, in the great capitals of Europe and of Asia as well as in the country of its publication. Ladies of fashion and seamstresses alike wept over the fate of the unhappy Zelica, and sang with pathos of the "Bower of Roses by Bendemeer's Stream." In

the court at Berlin on the occasion of a great fête given in honor of the Grand Duke Nicholas, of Russia, the poem was acted in character in a series of tableaus, in which princes and princesses and dukes and duchesses assumed the principal parts. The poet visited Paris and attended a ball at the Palais Royal. A Russian prince greeted him with some quotations from his poem. He met a friend returned from India, whose first greeting was: "You ought to be the happiest dog alive. I saw your book all along the road from Cairo to Calais." He met another traveler at one of the clubs, who said: "Your book is a greater traveler than you. I was obliged to spend two or three hours in a hut on the shores of the Caspian, and a Persian put a copy of your poem in my hand to kill the time." The songs of the poem were sung in palaces and in cottages by every kind of singer.

In addition to this the poet received a greater sum than was ever before paid for a single poem. Before a line of it was written the Messrs. Longmans paid him in advance three thousand guineas on his agreement to write them a long poem. It took him about two years and a half to fulfil his contract. The poem was "Lalla Rookh."

Do we read that poem in these days? It is barely three-quarters of a century since the whole world—one might say literally, the whole world—raved over it and took innumerable editions of it. Moore was ranked with the great poets of his time, and for some years was certainly the most popular, but if his fame depended on "Lalla Rookh," how many of us would know much about him? It is in fact a very excellent poem—of the second or third rank, to be sure—but still one that can be read with pleasure. It has many fine passages, and it is unsurpassed for its oriental imagery. One may smile at the second-hand learning of the foot notes, but they are both accurate and essential, for few English readers would understand the poem without them. Oriental natives and people who had traveled in the East could not believe that Moore had never been in the lands and amid the scenes he so accurately describes. He obtained all his knowledge from books which he read and studied while he was writing the poem, having access to the fine library of his friend, Lord Moira. The flower-scented valleys, the gorgeous gardens, the palaces and minarets, the houris of ravishing beauty and the long-robed priests in strange temples he saw only with the poet's eye. In this respect the poem is a remark-

able *tour de force*, a testimony at once to the poet's genius and his industry.

But it is not by "Lalla Rookh," nor "The Loves of the Angels," nor "Alciphron," nor "The Epicurean" that Moore has earned his just title to enduring fame. For that title we must go to his songs. Here he stands supreme among English poets, and for these he will be remembered as long as music holds sway over the human heart. His "National Airs," "Irish Melodies," "Sacred Songs" and "Ballads and Songs" show a great degree of range in subject and a most extraordinary fertility of production. Moore had the genius that could marry melody to verse in a degree never possessed by any other English poet except Robert Burns. The air fits his verse exactly. Moreover, the air is always striking and the verse poetical and with meaning. One of Moore's successors as a song writer was Haynes Bayly, who wrote very "catchy" airs, but his lines were usually nonsense, just as is the balderdash of modern opera. Moore never wrote trash nor nonsense. His songs are full of poetry—true poetry—and he never deteriorates into stupidity simply for the sake of the music.

These songs, it is true, have not the vogue they once had, for fashions change, but the

favorites remain and will always be sung, whatever else is forgotten. When will not some prima donna be called on to sing "The Last Rose of Summer" or "Oft in the Stilly Night"? When will not the heart be stirred by "Go Where Glory Waits Thee" or be moved by "The Harp That Once Through Tara's Hall"? When will the Christian soul not find consolation in "Come, Ye Disconsolate" or be encouraged to greater hope in Miriam's "Sound the Loud Timbrel"? These and scores of others are not only imbedded in the language, they are imbedded in the feelings of the English-speaking people the world over.

Thomas Moore was born in Dublin in 1779, and was educated at Trinity College in that city. From boyhood he wrote verses and songs. He was intended for the bar, and to pursue his studies he was sent to London. His equipment for the purpose was twenty pounds, some translations of Anacreon he had made at college, a letter of introduction to the Earl of Moira, an attractive but diminutive person, a genial temper, musical ability of a high order and a voice like a nightingale's. His introduction brought him into good society, and it was not long before London discovered his accomplishments. He became a social lion, and

his breakfast table was littered every morning with invitations to dinners and balls from half the peerage. He became a favorite of the Prince of Wales, to whom he dedicated his translation of "Anacreon." At the entertainments to which he was invited he sang his own songs, accompanying himself on the piano, and he generally had a bevy of fair women around him weeping their eyes out at the pathos of his songs. One of the fashionable women of the period said she walked ten miles to hear him sing, and Rogers once said to him as they were returning from a party where Moore had left a score of high-born dames and damsels weeping: "Surely you must have been born with a rose in your lips and a nightingale singing on the top of your bed." He sang his songs into popularity, and a publisher paid him five hundred pounds a year for the privilege of publishing them. Then he said good-by to the law, and turned song writer and poet. For nearly half a century he enjoyed such social triumphs as these. In 1848 his mind fell into decay, and in 1852 he died in his seventy-third year. He married happily, and his letters and diary show how deeply he was attached to his mother and wife.

Besides his serious poems and his songs, Moore wrote squibs, satires and humorous poems, of the

latter. "The Fudge Family in Paris" and "The Two-penny Postbag" being the chief. These, like his satires, are political, and have now lost their interest to all not acquainted with the chief politicians and questions of the first quarter of the century. But as a satirist he had no superior during his time, and ranks in that respect with Canning, Praed and Thackeray.

In 1804, Thomas Jefferson being President, Moore came to the United States on his way from Bermuda, where he had a government appointment. He was entertained in New York and Washington, where he saw Jefferson and did not like him, and visited the Falls of Niagara. Very naturally republican simplicity, not to say the general want of social culture, was not pleasing to Moore's refined sensibilities, and he went away and made remarks in verse about our rude forefathers, just as many an Englishman and an Irishman have done since in prose, much to the stirring up of our gall, but perhaps eventually to the betterment of our manners.

Under the title of "Odes and Epistles" he published these criticisms, with other verse, and Mr. Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* made some rather severe comments upon the volume and upon certain other poems of Moore's which

he had published a few years earlier under the *nom de plume* of Thomas Little. This led to a challenge from Moore to fight a duel, which Jeffrey accepted. The whole affair had a very ludicrous termination. The parties met, but neither principals nor seconds knew much about firearms or gunpowder. The consequence was that the seconds took up so much time in loading the pistols, forgetting even to put a ball in one of them, that the police had time to get wind of the affair and take the parties into custody before the signal to fire was given. The final upshot was that Moore and Jeffrey became fast friends for the remainder of their lives.

# THOMAS CAMPBELL.

(1777–1844).

THE three most splendid war poems in the English language were written by Thomas Campbell, and familiar as they are to almost every reader, can rarely be repeated without a stirring of the blood. "Hohenlinden," declaimed by every schoolboy, "Ye Mariners of England," and "The Battle of the Baltic," belong to immortal verse, and are ornaments of the literature of a race famed both for its singers and its warriors. No other poet, not even Tennyson in his "Charge of the Light Brigade," has reached a higher level in this particular form of lyric verse, though Campbell was not a great poet. He was simply happy in his opportunity.

His more ambitious poems, "The Pleasures of Hope" and "Gertrude of Wyoming," are scarcely read in these days, though there is a passage in the former, "The Fall of Poland," that has long

held a place in the school-books. There are few Americans who have not stood on school platforms and in impassioned boyish treble told the unhappy story of how

> Hope for a season bade the world farewell,
> And Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell.

This poem probably did more to keep alive American sympathy for Poland than anything else.

Thomas Campbell was born at Glasgow, July, 27, 1777, and was educated at the university in that city. "The Pleasures of Hope" was published in 1799 when he was twenty-two. Like Rogers' poem, "The Pleasures of Memory," it was fortunate in appearing at a time when it had no competitors for public favor. It was in the classical style and its smooth and pleasing couplets were received with the highest favor. Campbell was at once accorded a high seat on the British Parnassus.

Many of its lines have long been quoted for their aptness and melody.

> At summer's eve, when heaven's ethereal bow
> Spans with bright arch the glittering hills below,
> Why to yon mountain turns the musing eye,
> Whose sunbright summit mingles with the sky?

Why do these tints of shadow cliff appear
More sweet than all the landscape standing near?
'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue.
Thus with delight we linger to survey
The promised joys of life's unmeasured way.

Then follow the descriptions of such scenes in life in which hope prevails over the other feelings of the heart—the tempest-tossed longing for home—the youth looking forward to success in life—parents solicitous for the welfare of their children—maniac looking for her lost lover—and finally the hope of a life to come. If one is not too fastidious and too modern he may find much to enjoy in "The Pleasures of Hope."

When "Gertrude of Wyoming" appeared it was highly praised by Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*," but it requires considerable resolution for a modern reader to get through with it.

"Lochiel's Warning" is also a notable poem, and was a great favorite with Sir Walter Scott. It contains many stirring lines.

Campbell removed to London in 1803, and resided there until his death. He was for a number of years the editor of *Colburn's Monthly Magazine*, a very popular periodical in its day. He wrote biographies, compiled histories, and delivered lectures, all mere hack-work and all tol-

erably well forgotten. He was a warm friend of Washington Irving and gave him a letter of introduction to Scott that secured him a warm welcome at Abbotsford.

When Carlyle went up to London he carried letters to Campbell, but in his "Reminiscences" he gives no very favorable view of his brother Scot. He writes: "There is a smirk on his face which would befit a shopman or an auctioneer. His very eye has the cold vivacity of a conceited worldling. His talk is small, contemptuous and shallow. The blue frock and trousers, the eyeglass, the wig, the very fashion of his bow proclaim the literary dandy."

Inasmuch as Carlyle never spoke well of any one, we need not lay much stress on this description, but let us turn to Bulwer-Lytton, who succeeded Campbell as editor of the *Monthly*.

I remember being told by a personage who was both a very popular writer and a very brilliant converser that the poet Campbell reminded him of Goldsmith, his conversation was so inferior to his fame. I could not deny it, for I had often met Campbell in general society, and his talk had disappointed me. Three days afterward Campbell asked me to come and sup with him tête-à-tête. I did so. I went at ten o'clock. I stayed till dawn, and all my recollections of the most sparkling talk I have ever heard in drawing-rooms afford nothing to equal the riotous affluence of wit, of humor, of fancy, of genius, that the great lyrist poured forth in his

wondrous monologue. Monologue it was ; he had it all to himself.

Campbell's literary work was not large, but his life was reasonably successful, and he received considerable honor and praise while he lived. His domestic life was not particularly happy, due principally to his own uncomfortable disposition and habits. He died in 1844, and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

# HARTLEY COLERIDGE,

## PET OF POETS.

## (1796–1849.)

O THOU ! whose fancies from afar are brought ;
  Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
And fittest to unutterable thought
  The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol ;
Thou fairy voyager ! that dost float
In such clear water that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air than on an earthly stream ;
Suspended on a stream as clear as sky,
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery ;
O blessed Vision ! happy Child !
Thou art so exquisitely wild,
I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years.

* * * * * *

Thou art a dew-drop which the morn brings forth,
Ill fitted to sustain unkindly shocks
Or to be trailed along the soiling earth ;
A gem that glitters while it lives,
And no forewarning gives,
But at the touch of wrong, without a strife,
Slips in a moment out of life.

This is a quotation from Wordsworth's beautiful ode addressed to Hartley Coleridge when he was six years of age.

Hartley Coleridge was the oldest son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet son of a poet father, and the muses presided at his birth and rocked his cradle. His father thus addresses him:

My babe so beautiful, it thrills my heart
With tender gladness thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw naught lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountains and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags; so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! He shall mold
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Throughout his life Hartley Coleridge impressed every one who came in contact with him as an extraordinary person. From childhood he associated with poets. He was brought up by

his uncle, Robert Southey, and was taught before he could read that literature, and more particularly poetry, was the highest object of human aspiration. He had the companionship of Wordsworth, De Quincey, Professor Wilson, and all of those eminent men who have made the English Lake country famous in the annals of our literature. He roamed as boy and man through that beautiful region communing with nature and making friends with town and country folk of every degree, for every one loved him.

Like his father, he lived in an imaginary world, and he invented stories with which he amused his younger brothers and sisters. One tale he continued for years. It related to a kingdom of which he was the ruler—the kingdom of Ejuxria. It was evolved with great consistency and minuteness. He gave the names of generals and statesmen, told of wars of reform and the progress of opinion. He described his people, their dress, habits, and language, and would recite the speeches he made in the senate, which he said he translated for the benefit of his hearers. Once when he was but eight years of age he was observed to be walking pensively back and forth. When asked what troubled him he replied: "My people are too fond of war. I have just made an eloquent speech

in the senate which has made no impression on them, and to war they will go."

He was born in 1796, and after a somewhat desultory school training was sent to Oxford at the age of nineteen. He had no very accurate knowledge of the classics, but his mind was stored with original thoughts and a general knowledge of books which he had acquired in his Uncle Southey's library. He possessed a rare gift of lively and eloquent conversation, which caused him to be much sought after on social occasions, and at wine parties given by the undergraduates. Alexander Dyce, who knew him at this period, says: "Leaning his head on one shoulder, turning up his dark, bright eyes, and swinging backward and forward in his chair, he would hold forth by the hour (for no one wished to interrupt him) on whatever subject might have been started—either of literature, politics or religion—with an originality of thought, a force of illustration and a facility and beauty of expression which I question if any man then living, except his father, could have surpassed." But, alas! the "wine parties" fastened upon him that habit which was to curse the remainder of his life.

He achieved considerable distinction as a scholar, and won the Oriel fellowship, one of the

great college prizes, but on graduation the authorities deprived him of it because of his habits. They tried to make it up to him by a present of three hundred pounds, but he retired from the university a disappointed man. The rest of his life may be narrated in a few words. He went to London and tried to live by his pen, but the temptations of the metropolis were too great for him, and he returned to his beloved lake country. There he lived in a quiet cottage, looked after by warm and loving friends. Periodically he would disappear for a time and then return to his writing and his books.

Caroline Fox, in her delightful "Memories of Old Friends," described her meeting with him and how fascinating he was as a companion. She thus pictures him: "Conjure up to thyself a little, round, high-shouldered man, shrunk into a little black coat, the features of his face molded by habit into an expression of pleasantry and an appreciation of the exquisitely ludicrous. Such as one could fancy Charles Lamb's. Little black eyes, twinkling intensely, as if every sense were called on to taste every idea. He is very anxious to establish an ugly club and to be its chairman, but really he is quite unworthy of the station, for odd enough he is, but never ugly, there is such a

radiant light of genius over all." He was at this time forty-one years of age.

His life glided on without incident until January 6, 1849, when he died. Wordsworth, who had stood by his cradle and had been his constant friend and counselor, pointed out the place in Grasmere churchyard for his grave, saying: "Let him lie by us." Two years later the older poet was laid by the side of the younger.

# WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

(1775–1864.)

Not many persons in these days read "Gebir," an epic poem couched in Miltonic verse, by Walter Savage Landor. It relates the adventures of the Prince of Spain, Gebir—whence Gibraltar—in his war with Charoba, the Queen of Egypt. It is highly imaginative, lofty in thought, and many colossal figures pass and repass before the reader, but not even Keats' "Endymion" fell flatter from the press. Whoever reads will admire it, in passages, at least, for sometimes it is very great, more often it only approaches greatness, but the difficulty has always been to get people to take it up. Southey read and praised it in the pages of the *Quarterly*, and it had great charm for De Quincey who "conceited himself," as he says, to be the sole purchaser and appreciator of it. Charles Lamb was another reader and admirer, and in late years Sidney Colvin in his "Life of Landor," has shown forth its beauties.

But to the general it is caviare, as, indeed, are the most of Landor's writings, both of prose and poetry. One almost has to be born a Landorian, though I think the taste may be cultivated. His greatest work is the "Imaginary Conversations," but their very bulk deters most readers.

In one of these conversations, which purports to be between himself and Archdeacon Hare, he says of himself: "Poetry was always my amusement, prose my study and business. I have published five volumes of 'Imaginary Conversations,' cut the worst of them through the middle, and there will remain in this decimal fraction quite enough to satisfy my appetite for fame. I shall dine late; but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select."

The "Imaginary Conversations" were the work of Landor's life, commenced in 1821 and concluded only with his latest years. In 1856 one of the dialogues appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, when he was eighty-one, of which Carlyle asks: "Do you think the grand old Pagan wrote that piece just now? The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians. An unsubduable old Roman." These writings take every range of thought, of subject, of character, and of time. They form a wonder-

ful pageant, a long procession of earth's greatest heroes, with whom the vastness of Landor's reading made him familiar, and his dramatic instinct reanimated them in thought with the form of life. They were intended to be the drama of the ages, exhibiting the characters of races, the transits of nations, the succession of social politics, the changes of literatures, the growth and fall of philosophies. It was a noble scheme, Shakespearian in outline, a great part of which Landor accomplished. In this vast treasure-house one needs only to wander at will to secure for himself rare gems and precious stones of thought and expression. To read them deliberately through is to enter upon a task over which the reader will yawn many times, but they may be read in passages with an ever-constant delight. There one may read in the "Correspondence Between Pericles and Apasia" the daily occurrences of Athenian life and what the notable Greeks were doing and thinking. The legends and history of England are told in the dialogues of Lady Godiva and her husband, Leofric; of John of Gaunt and Joanna of Kent; of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. In France we find Joan of Arc conversing with Agnes Sorel, and Bossinet with the Duchess de Fontanges; and in Italy, Dante and Beatrice relate the story of their love.

Literary conversations also abound, as between Lord Bacon and Richard Hooker, Milton and Andrew Marvel, Bishop Burnet and Humphrey Hardcastle, Dr. Johnson and John Horne Tooke, David Hume and John Hume, Robert Southey and Richard Porson, Southey and Landor and an innumerable host of others in all civilized lands. Then there are dialogues of famous women, as between Elizabeth and Cecil, Mary Queen of Scots and Bothwell, the Empress Catherine of Russia and the Princess Dashkoff. There are, too, the conversations of sovereigns and statesmen, which include those of Richard I. and the Abbot of Bexley, Oliver Cromwell and Walter Noble, Washington and Franklin, Lord Chesterfield and Lord Chatham, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Canning. These are but a small part of the great numbers contained in the five volumes of "Imaginary Conversations."

Walter Savage Landor was born in 1775 in the same decade with Scott, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey. He died in 1864, aged eighty-nine, having spent sixty-eight years in the pursuit of literature. We know of no English writer whose literary career extends over so long a period. It was said of Keats that he was a "Greek born out of due time," but Landor was

more Hellenic than Keats. He should have lived in the Athens of Pericles. He had much, too, of Roman patrician in his composition, a modern Coriolanus, full of pride and ambition, and of hot, imperious temper. His affinity was with Plutarch's heroes, who had walked beside the Ilyssus and the Tiber. His was a large nature, undisciplined and untamed. With intellectual qualities of the highest order he possessed the gravest personal defects. Outbursts of ungovernable anger and childish waywardness marred and frustrated no small part of his career, but he possessed a noble and unselfish pride which gave him high ideals, and in nothing was he ever low or mean. Whoever recalls the character of Lawrence Boythorn in "Bleak House" will see a portrait of Landor, for Dickens was one of his most admiring friends.

Born to a large fortune he was never compelled to depend upon his pen for a livelihood, and this perhaps made him indifferent to immediate success. He seems to have met with appreciation in America much earlier than in England, and his praise was sounded by Emerson, Lowell, and Hillard long before any but the most select few in England acknowledged his merit.

Emerson when he went abroad the first time

made the "Imaginary Conversations" the companion of his voyage, and Landor was one of the three or four Englishmen he desired most to see. He met him at Florence, where Landor then resided, and in "English Traits" described his interview.

"I found him noble and courteous, living in a cloud of pictures at his villa Gheradesca, a fine house commanding a beautiful landscape. I had inferred from his books or magnified from some anecdotes an impression of Achillean wrath—an untamable petulance. I do not know whether the imputations were just or not, but certainly, on this May day his courtesy veiled that haughty mind, and he was the most patient and gentle of hosts.

Then follows a report of conversations and opinions expressed, which were entirely characteristic of Landor and truthfully reported, but which when published made Landor roar like a wounded lion. Emerson did not know, what Landor's friends well knew, that any expression of opinion by him on art or literature made one day was very apt to be repudiated the next. He was subject to every shifting wind of whim or prejudice, which would often raise to a whirlwind of passion only to be laughed at as soon as the tempest was over. He put no curb upon his tongue, but rattled off whatever came uppermost.

Landor's friendship for Southey was lifelong, and began in Southey's appreciation of "Gebir." Southey dedicated "Kehama" to Landor, and the latter gives Southey a high place in the "Conversations." "The reciprocal civility of authors,"

says Dr. Johnson, "is one of the most risible in the farce of life."

It enabled, however, both Southey and Landor to put up with a good deal of neglect from the public.

But we cannot go wrong in taking up with Landor. He is one of the most charming and graceful of English writers.

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